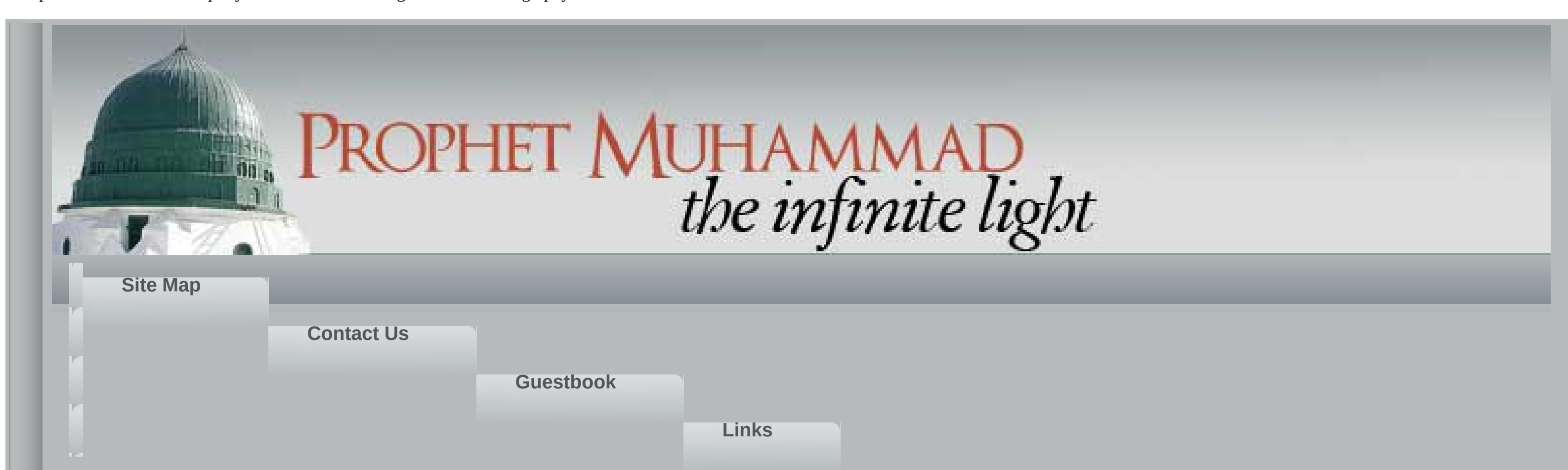


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Aspects of His Life

Prophet Muhammad appeared at a time when people had lost their knowledge of the true religion and had reverted to worshipping idols of stones, earth, bread, and even cheese.

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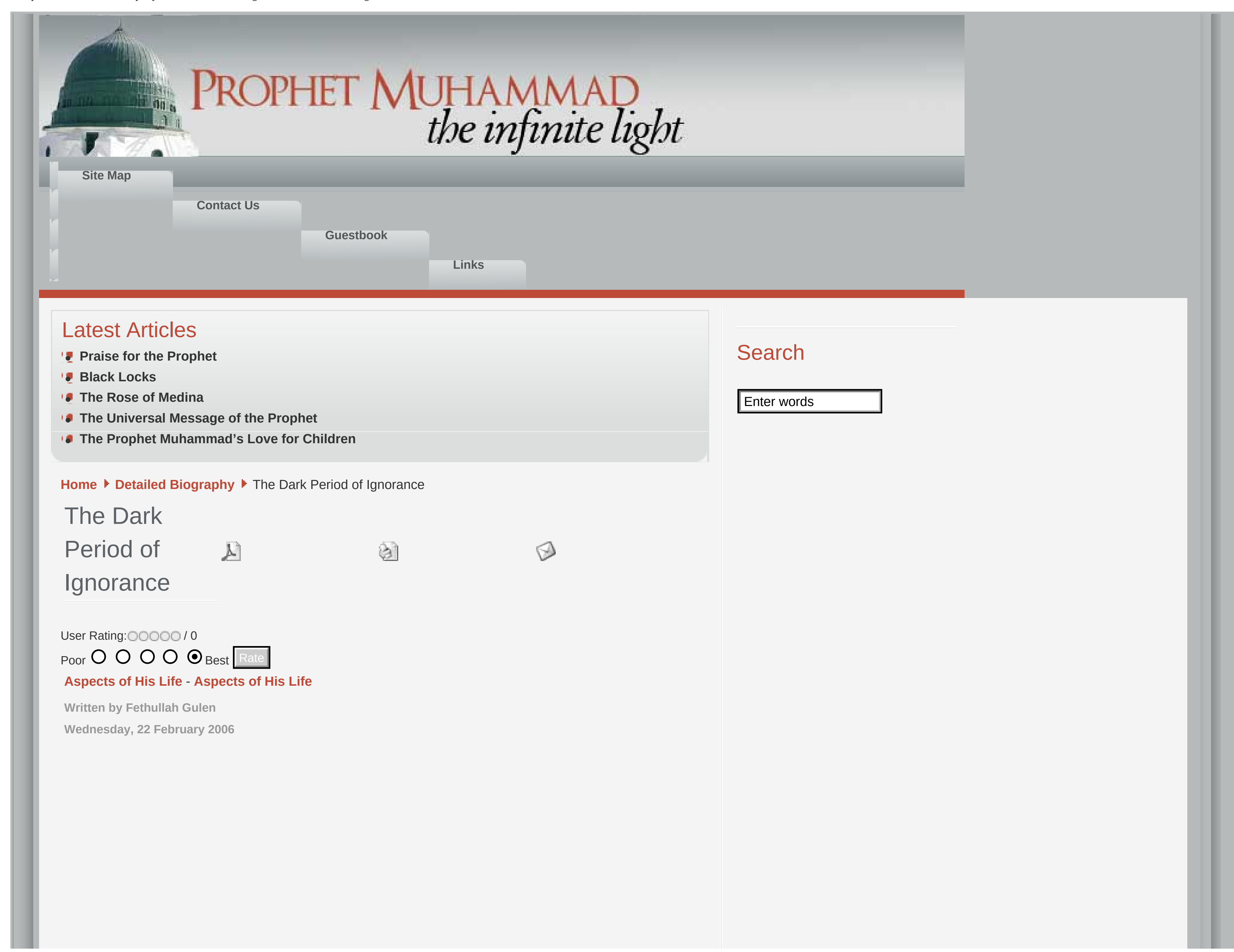
Quote

“He must be called the Saviour of Humanity. I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it much needed peace and happiness.”
-The Genuine Islam, Singapore, Vol.

1, No. 8, 1936

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The Dark Period of Ignorance

Aspects of His Life - Aspects of His Life

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

Every period of human history characterized by associating partners with God, whether by worshipping idols, deifying individuals, or attributing creativity to nature and material causes, is wholly dark. When belief in God's Unity is removed from people's hearts, their minds and souls darken, standards change, and things and the world are judged from false points of view. The Qur'an defines this moral, spiritual, social, and even economic and scientific state as jahiliyya (ignorance): Or like darkness on a deep sea obscure, covered by a wave, above which is a wave, above which is a cloud. Layers of darkness one upon the other. When he holds out his hand, wellnigh he cannot see it. And he for whom God has assigned no light, for him there is no light (24:40).

I do not like describing falsehood. Besides, it is wrong to do so where truth may be described. In the words of God: What is there, after truth, but misguidance? (10:32). However, to clarify the subject, I will say a few words about the pre-Islamic era, known as the Age of Jahiliyya.

Prophet Muhammad appeared at a time when people had lost their knowledge of the true religion and had reverted to worshipping idols of stones, earth, bread, and even cheese. As stated in the Qur'an: They were serving, apart from God, what hurts them not, neither profits them, and they say: "These are our intercessors with God" (10:18).

They were so degraded in thought and morals that, as reported by Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, they would cut their idols into pieces and eat them. The only excuse offered was that they were following in the steps of their forefathers: When it is said to them: "Follow what God has sent down" they say: "No. We follow that wherein we found our fathers" (2:170).

They also buried their daughters alive: When any of them is given the good tidings of a girl, his face is darkened and he chokes inwardly, as he hides himself from the people because of the evil of the good tidings that have been given to him, whether he shall preserve her in humiliation, or trample her into the dust (16:58–59).

Women were despised, not only in pre-Islamic Arabia but also in the Roman and Sassanid lands. The Qur'an openly declares that men will be questioned concerning this: When the female (infant) buried alive is questioned—for what crime was she killed? (81:8-9).

After Muhammad had declared his Prophethood, a Companion told him what he had done with his daughter:

O Messenger of God, I had a daughter. One day I told her mother to dress her, for I was taking her to her uncle. My poor wife knew what this meant, but could do nothing but obey and weep. She dressed the girl, who was very happy that she was going to see her uncle. I took her near a well, and told her to look down into it. While she was looking into the well, I kicked her into it. While she was rolling down, she was shouting: "Daddy, Daddy!"

As he was recounting this, the Prophet sobbed as if he had lost one of his nearest kinsfolk. [1]

Hearts had become hard. Every day a pit was dug in the desert for an innocent girl to be buried. Human beings were more brutal and cruel than hyenas. The powerful crushed the weak. Brutality was taken for humanity, cruelty received approval, the bloodthirsty were exalted, bloodshed was considered a virtue, and adultery and fornication were more common than legal marriage. The family structure had been destroyed.

Quote

"Through the Light he spreads, that place of universal mourning has been transformed into a place where God's Names and praises are recited in joy and ecstasy. The foreign, hostile beings have become friends and brothers."
-Bediuzzaman Said Nursi

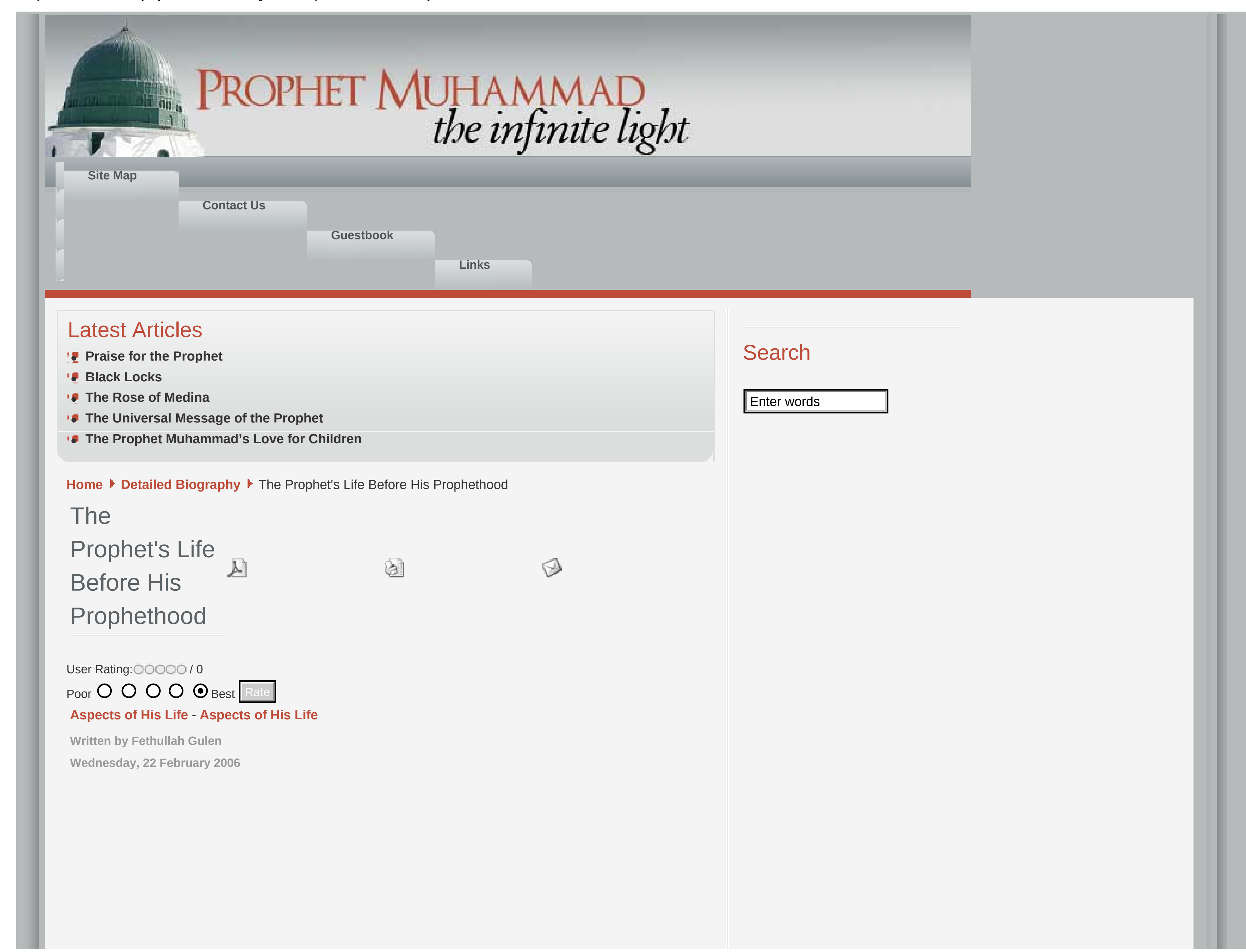
This dark period was followed by Islam. In addition to eradicating all other evils, God declared in the Qur'an: Do not slay your children because of the fear of poverty: We provide for you and for them (6:151).

Darimi, Sunan,"Muqaddima" 7-8.

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The Prophet's Life Before His Prophethood

Aspects of His Life - Aspects of His Life

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

Prophet Muhammad was brought up in God's sight and care. His father 'Abd Allah died before he was born, which meant that he had to put all his trust in God and submit completely to Him. He visited his father's tomb in Madina years later, cried his heart out, and on his return said: "I wept for my father and entreated God to forgive him."

With the death of his father, God deprived him of all human support and directed him to the realization that there is no deity but God, Who has no partners.

His grandfather and uncle protected him to some extent, but he came to perceive that his real guardian was God. Behind every phenomenon and every cause and effect, he could discern the hand of the Single Creator of the universe and of causes. The Oneness of God would be manifested to him in the light of Divine Unity. That is, he would be tested in this world of wisdom, where material causes and means have a part in every attainment, and so would have to use necessary material causes and means and take all necessary measures to attain anything. He would have to depend wholly on his Lord and ask Him for any help, thereby demonstrating that only God creates the result and gives success.

As a result of his father's death, he came to be called the "Matchless Orphan Pearl." In reference to this, God addressed him years later: Your Lord shall give you, and you shall be satisfied. Did He not find you an orphan and shelter you?... Did He not find you needy and suffice you? As for the orphan, do not oppress him, and as for the beggar, scold him not (93:5-6, 8-10).

The Matchless Orphan Pearl also lost his mother, Amina, at an early age. When she died in Abwa at age 25 or 26 on her way back from visiting her husband's tomb in Madina, Muhammad was only 6 years old. Thus, he learned the pain of having no father or mother. Indeed, he would learn and suffer everything, for he was sent to teach everything to humanity and to be an example in every respect.

His grandfather 'Abd al-Muttalib, a respected Makkan elder, undertook his protection. For this reason, God saved 'Abd al-Muttalib from misfortune. He embraced his beloved grandson, and always offered him the seat of honor in his house. He felt that Muhammad would grow up to save humanity. Muhammad was so noble and well-mannered that his grandfather anticipated his Prophethood. He was not the first of his noble forefathers to do so, however; Ka'b ibn Luayy, who some consider a Prophet, predicted that the Last Messenger would be raised from his own progeny. He mentioned him by name:

Suddenly Prophet Muhammad will appear;
He will give tidings, and is truthful in his tidings.

'Abd al-Muttalib, whom even the great army of Abraha could not bring to tears, wept bitterly when he took to his deathbed. When his son, Abu Talib, asked what was wrong, he replied: "I'm weeping because I'll no longer be able to embrace Muhammad," and then added: "I'm afraid something might happen to my Matchless Pearl. I entrust him to you for safekeeping."

Abu Talib assumed Muhammad's protection and, in return, his son 'Ali would be blessed with being the father of Muhammad's progeny. After Prophethood, the Messenger of God said to 'Ali: "Every other Prophet's progeny descended from himself, but my progeny will descend from you." 'Ali would be the father and the greatest saint until the Last Day, as the representative of the Prophet's sainthood. This is Abu Talib's reward for helping Muhammad.

Abu Talib protected Muhammad with great care. Historians and biographers, such as Ibn Ishaq, relate that

Abu Talib took his nephew to Syria in a trade caravan when he was 10 or 12 years old. They stopped somewhere near Damascus and left him, as he was the youngest, to watch over the caravan. From his nearby monastery, the Christian monk Bahira was observing the caravan. This monk was expecting the arrival of the Last Prophet, and so always studied people. He noticed that a cloud followed the caravan, stopping and starting when the caravan did so, in order that one of its members would be shaded. [1] He thought: "This is a special characteristic of the Prophets. The expected Prophet must be in that caravan."

When the caravan stopped near his monastery, Bahira invited its members over for a meal. Noticing the cloud still hovering over the caravan, he asked Abu Talib if someone had been left behind. Abu Talib answered that they had left a young boy to watch over their things. The monk asked them to fetch him. When Muhammad came, Bahira took Abu Talib to one side and asked him about his relationship with the boy. "He is my son," Abu Talib answered, but Bahira disputed this, saying: "He can't be your son. According to our books, his father must have died before his birth." Then he added: "Let me give you this advice. Take this boy back immediately. The Jews are envious. If they recognize him, they'll harm him." Abu Talib made an excuse to the other caravan members and returned to Makka with his nephew. [2]

Prophet Muhammad made a second journey when he was 25 years old, with the trade caravan of Khadija, a respected widow he would later marry. On the journey, he encountered Bahira once more. The monk was very pleased with this second meeting, and told him: "You will be a Prophet, the Last Prophet. I wish that God would allow me to live to see you raised as a Prophet. I would follow you, carry your shoes and protect you against your enemies!"

Another major event of Muhammads' early life was the fijar (sacrilegious) war that occurred during his later teens. This was the fourth war that violated the sanctity of the sacred months (Dhu al-Qa'dah, Dhu al-Hijjah, Muharram, and Rajab) and the sacred territory of Makka. Its immediate cause was two men's jealousy and animosity. One belonged to the Banu Kinanah (a confederate of the Quraysh tribe) and the other to the Qays-'Aylan (an important clan of the Hawazin tribe). The future Prophet, who would end all injustice and lawlessness, helped his uncle Zubayr ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, who represented Banu Hashim in the war, gather the arrows shot by the enemy.

Another important event was his presence at the meeting that resulted in the hilf al-hudul (the alliance of the virtuous). This league against injustice was sponsored mainly by the Banu Hashim and the Banu al-Muttalib tribes. It was formed to ensure that foreign merchants would no longer be deprived of their rights, as happened when the Qurayshi 'As ibn Wa'il usurped a Yemeni merchant's goods. The Yemeni appealed to the Qurayshi leaders for help, but they ignored him. When the Banu Hashim, Muhammad's clan, heard of this, they decided to form the hilf al-fudul and force the return of the merchant's money. They also took an oath that whenever they someone in Makka, whether citizen or stranger, suffered an injustice, they would offer their support until justice was done. Muhammad was so impressed with its noble objectives that he would say long after: "I attended the conclusion of an agreement at 'Abd Allah ibn Jud'an's house. I would not exchange it for the best material gain. If someone appeals to it in Islam, I would respond."

Muhammad's childhood and youth were a prelude to his Prophethood. Besides his other exalted and laudable characteristics, everyone agreed upon his truthfulness and trustworthiness. He never lied, cheated, broke his word, or participated in pagan rituals (jahiliyya). He was called "the Truthful, Trustworthy Man" even by his bitterest enemies.

People would say of him: "If you have to travel and need someone to look after your wife, entrust her to Muhammad without hesitation, for he will not even glance at her face. If you want to entrust your wealth for safeguarding, entrust it to this trustworthy, honest man, for he will never touch it. If you look for someone

Quote

“Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, unveiled the transitory nature of this world and death, and showed the grave to be a waiting room opening onto the realm of eternal happiness. He led every heart seeking happiness, regardless of place or time, to the fountain of Khadr, and enabled them to drink the elixir of immortality.”
-Fethullah Gulen

who never tells a lie and never breaks his word, go directly to Muhammad, because whatever he says is true."

Those who knew him from his childhood immediately believed in him when he declared his Prophethood. Among them were Abu Bakr, 'Uthman, Talha, Zubayr, Abu Dharr, and Yasir. When 'Ammar told Yasir (his father) that he believed in Muhammad the latter responded: "If Muhammad says that God is One, it is true. He never lies."

In the early days of his Prophethood, Prophet Muhammad once summoned the Qurayshis to the foot of Abu Qubays hill. He asked them: "Would you believe me if I told you an enemy host was waiting behind this hill to attack you?" Everyone answered that they would, even his uncle Abu Lahab, who would become his bitterest enemy. [3]

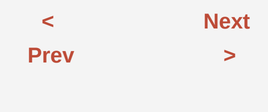
When humanity was in dire need of someone to destroy unbelief and breathe new life into the world, God raised Muhammad to stop all forms of wickedness. In the words of Ahmad Shawky:

The sun of guidance was born, and the entire universe was illumined.
A smile appeared on the lips of time, and his praises were sung.

When he appeared on the horizon of Madina years later, the pure, innocent children of that illumined city would sing his praises as follows:

The "full moon" rose upon us from the hills of Wada',
So it is incumbent upon us to thank God so long as
Those who pray and entreat Him continue to do so. [4]

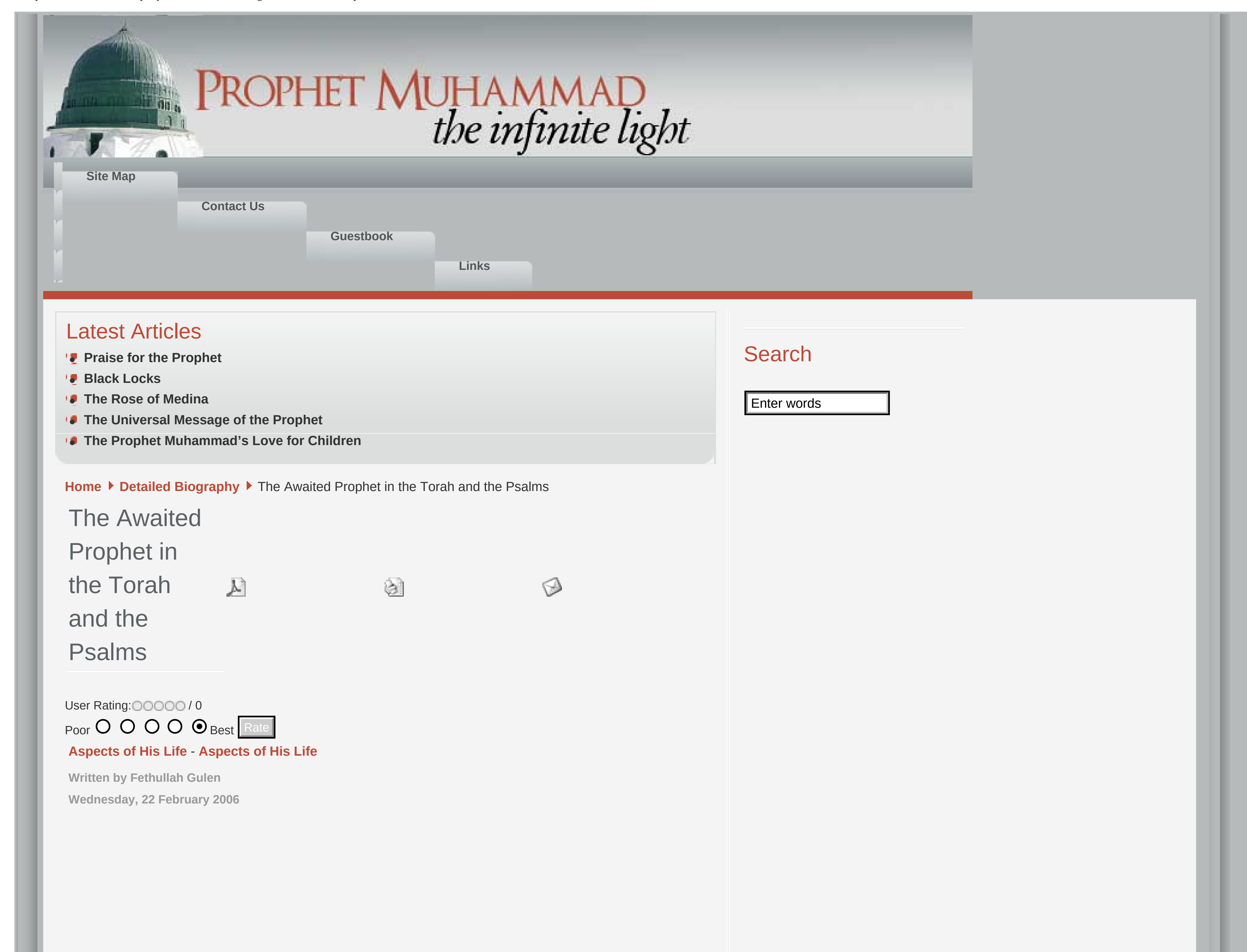
Busiri, in his famous Qasida al-Bur'a (Eulogy of Bur'a) mentions this incident, saying: "A cloud hovers over his head and protects him from the sun."
[2] Ibn Hisham, Sira, 1:191.
[3] Sahih al-Bukhari, Tafsir, 1:111; Sahih al-Muslim, Iman, 355.
[4] Ibn Kathir, al-Bidaya, 3:241.



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Aspects of His Life - Aspects of His Life
Written by Fethullah Gulen
Wednesday, 22 February 2006

A Companion once asked God's Messenger to talk about himself. The Messenger remarked: "I am the one for whose coming Abraham prayed and of whom Jesus gave glad tidings." [1] This alludes to the following Qur'anic verses:

(Abraham prayed): "Our Lord, raise up in their midst a Messenger from among them who shall recite unto them Your signs, and teach them the Book and Wisdom, and purify them. Verily you are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise." (2:129)

When Jesus, son of Mary, said: "O children of Israel! I am indeed a Messenger of God to you, confirming that which was [revealed] before me in the Torah, and bringing good tidings of a Messenger who shall come after me, whose name is Ahmad [the Praised One]." (61:6)

The Messenger of God was expected. All preceding Prophets spoke of and predicted his coming. The Qur'an (3:81) specifically states that God made a covenant with the Prophets that they would believe in and help the Messenger who would come after them and confirm the Message that they brought. [2]

Although subjected to distortion and alteration, the current versions of the Torah, the Gospel, and the Psalms still contain verses alluding to Prophet Muhammad. The late Husayn Jisri found 114 such allusions and quoted them in his Risala al-Hamidiya. We cite a few examples here, beginning with: The Lord came from Sinai and dawned over them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran (Deuteronomy 33:2).

This refers to the Prophethood of Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, respectively. Sinai is where Prophet Moses spoke to God and received the Torah. Seir, a place in Palestine, is where Prophet Jesus received Divine Revelation. Paran is where God manifested Himself to humanity for the last time through His Revelation to Prophet Muhammad.

Paran is a mountain range in Makka. It is mentioned in the Torah (Genesis 21:19–21) as the desert area where Hagar was left by her husband Abraham to live with her son Ishmael. The Zamzam well also is located there. As stated in the Qur'an (14:35–37), Abraham left Hagar and Ishmael in the valley of Makka, which was then an uninhabited place between the mountain ranges of Paran.

It is because of such explicit predictions in the Torah that the Jews were expecting the Last Prophet and knew that he would appear in Makka.

The verse of Deuteronomy, according to the Arabic version published in London in 1944, continues: He came with myriads of holy ones; in his right hand was an axe of fire with two edges. This verse refers to the promised Prophet, who would have numerous Companions of the highest degree of sainthood and would be allowed—even ordered—to fight his enemies.

The following verses also promise his coming of:

The Lord said to me [Moses]: "What they say is good. I will raise up for them a Prophet like you among their brothers; I will put My words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to My words that the Prophet speaks in My name, I will Myself call him to account." (Deuteronomy 18:17–19)

It is clear from these verses that a Prophet like you among their brothers means a Prophet from Ishmael's line, for Ishmael is the brother of Isaac, the forefather of the Children of Israel. The only Prophet who came

Quote

"He speaks truly of a future that is such that the future in this world is like a tiny mirage in comparison. And he tells most seriously of a happiness that is such that all worldly happiness is like a fleeting flash of lightening in comparison to an eternal sun."

after Moses and resembled him in many ways (e.g., bringing a new law and waging war against his enemies) is Prophet Muhammad. The Qur'an points to the same fact: We have sent to you a Messenger as a witness over you, even as we sent to Pharaoh a Messenger (73:15).

'Abd Allah ibn 'Amr, an ascetic warned by the Prophet not to neglect sleeping with his wife and to fast only on alternate days, is reported to have said: "It was common knowledge to the communities of previous religions that God would send a Prophet to humanity as a bearer of good tidings and a warner. I personally read in the Torah these verses about him:

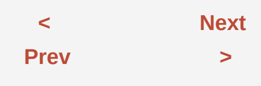
We have sent you, O Prophet, to humanity as a bearer of good tidings and a warner, and as a support and refuge for the common folk. You are My servant and Messenger. I have called you Mutawakkil [the one who puts his trust in God]. He is not one rude, repelling and angry, and shouting in the streets. He does not repel evil with evil; instead, he excuses and forgives. God will not make him die before He guides through him the deviating nation to the right path by declaring there is no deity but God." [3]

This report was confirmed by 'Abd Allah ibn Salam and Ka'b al-Akhbar, the most learned scholars of the Jewish community at the time of the Prophet. They later converted to Islam.

We also read about Muhammad in the Psalms of David:

He will rule from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the Earth. The desert tribes will bow before him, and his enemies will lick the dust. The kings of Tarsish and of distant shores will bring tribute to him; the kings of Sheba and Seba will present gifts to him. All kings will bow down to him and all nations will serve him, for he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy, and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight. Long may he live! May gold from Sheba be given to him. May people ever pray for him and bless him all day long. Let corn abound throughout the land; on the tops of the hills may it sway. May his name endure for ever; may it continue as long as the sun. All nations will be blessed through him, and they will call him blessed. (Psalms 72:8–17)

[1] Muttaqi al-Hindi, Kanz al-'Ummal, 11:384.
[2] Behold, Allah took the Covenant of the Prophets, saying: "I give you a Book and Wisdom. Then a Messenger comes to you, confirming what is with you. Believe in him and help him. Allah asked: "Do you agree, and take this Covenant as binding?" They replied: "We agree." He said: "Then bear witness, and I am with you among the witnesses."
[3] Bukhari, Buyu', 50; Ibn Hanbal, 2:174.


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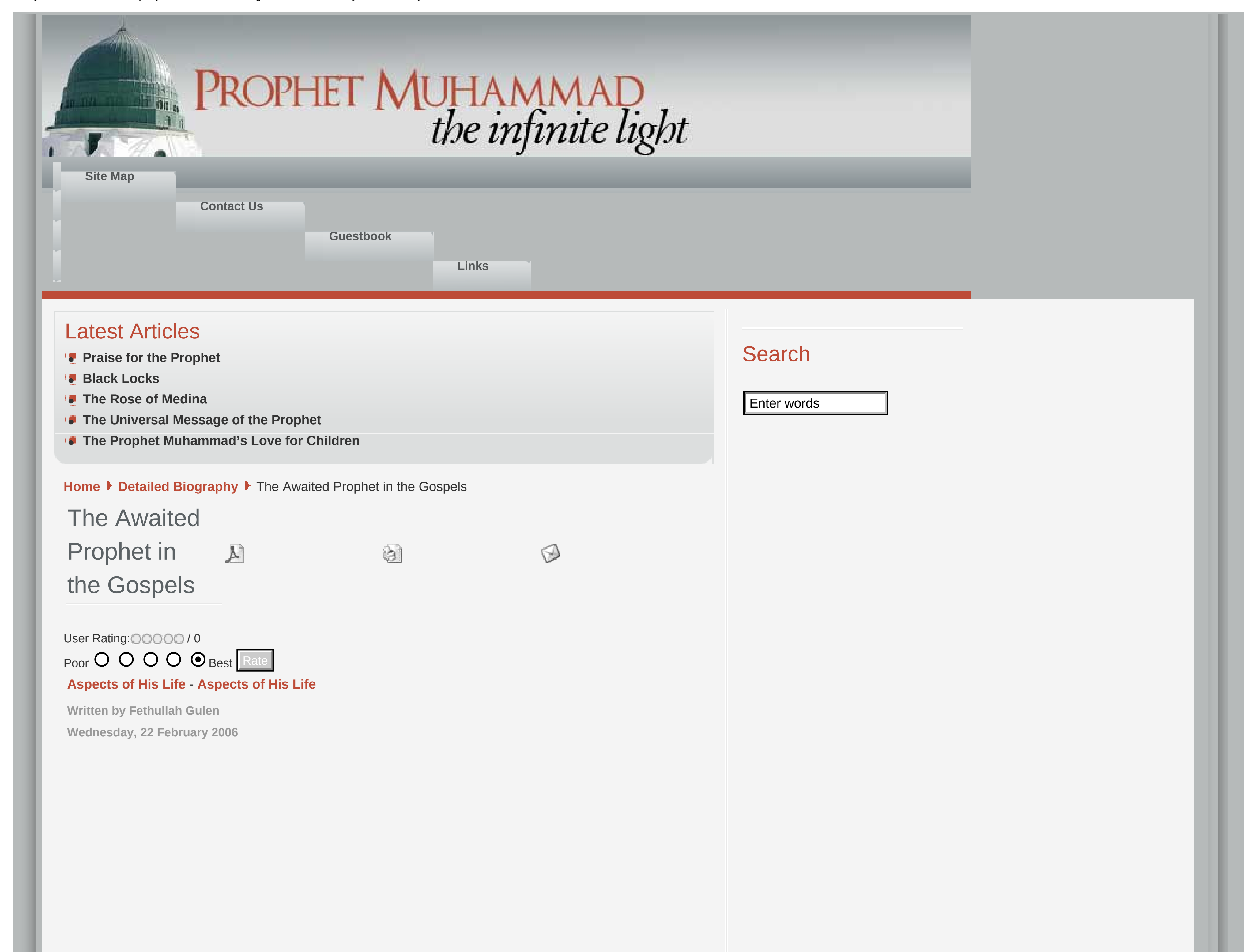
-Bediüzzaman Said Nursi

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The Awaited Prophet in the Gospels

Aspects of His Life - **Aspects of His Life**

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

More emphatically and frequently than any other Prophet, Prophet Jesus gave good tidings of Muhammad. In the Gospel of John, Jesus promises his arrival using several names: But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Paraklit will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment (John, 16:7-8).

In these verses, Prophet Muhammad is referred to as the Paraklit. This Greek word means "the Distinguisher between Truth and Falsehood." Christian interpreters have given it various meanings, such as Counselor (Gideons International), Helper (American Bible Society), or Comforter (the Company of the Holy Bible), and claim that it refers to the Holy Spirit. However, they have never been able to establish whether the Holy Spirit came down after Jesus and did what Jesus said it would do.

If, according to Christians, the Holy Spirit is Archangel Gabriel, he came many times to Prophet Muhammad to bring Divine Revelations. Further, Jesus mentioned and predicted the Paraklit with other names but the same function, as seen below:

When Paraklit comes—the Spirit of truth—who comes from the Father, he will testify about me. (John 15:26)

I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking what is mine and making it known to you. (John 16:12–14)

I will not speak with you much longer, for the Prince of this world is coming. And I posses nothing of him. (John 14:30)

Who has come after Jesus other than Prophet Muhammad, as the Comforter who has comforted human beings against their fear of death, worries of the future, and spiritual ailments? As the Helper, who has helped humanity attain real peace and happiness in both worlds? As the Prince of the world, who has ruled almost half the world for fourteen centuries and has become the beloved of billions? As the Spirit of truth, who has testified to Jesus, brought glory to him by declaring his Prophethood against the Jews' denial and the Christians' false deification, and restoring his religion to its pristine purity through the Book revealed to him?

What shortcomings do Western Christians attribute to Prophet Muhammad, in contrast to Jesus and other Prophets, that, while almost all Middle Eastern Christians believed in him and became Muslim within a few decades of his death, they persist in denying him?

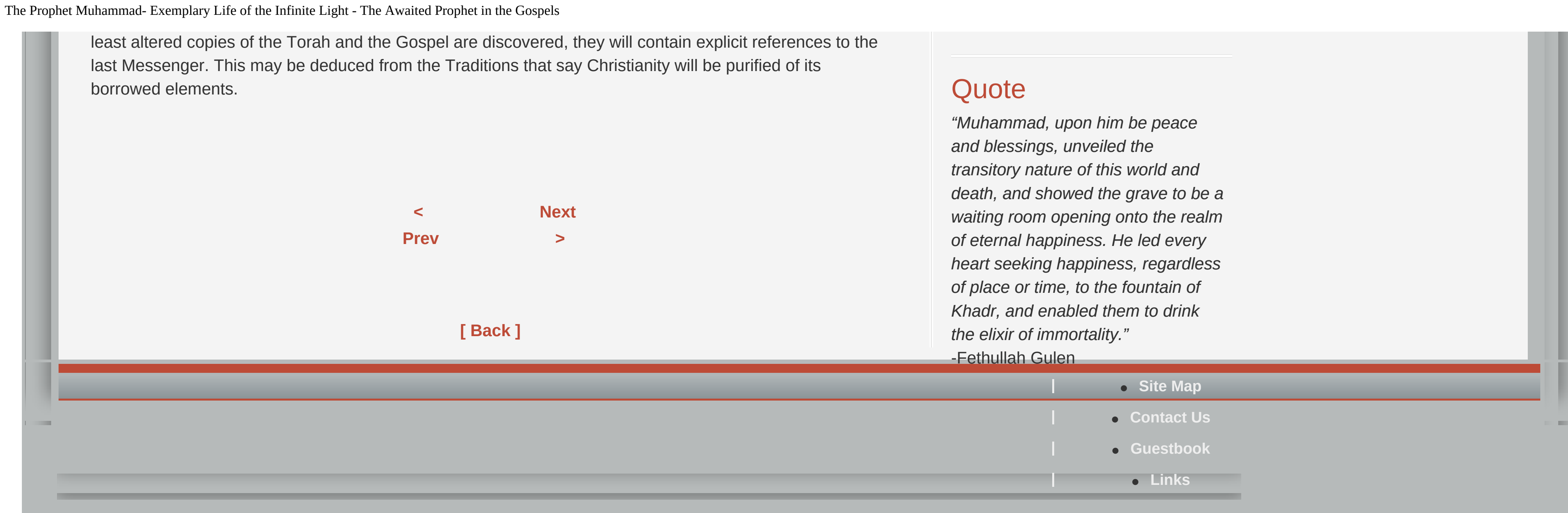
Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi, a great Sufi saint, expresses in the following stanza the good tidings of Prophet Muhammad found in the Gospel:

In the Gospel Mustafa is mentioned with his attributes. In him is the mystery of all the Prophets; he is the bringer of happiness. The Gospel mentions him with his external form and features, and also with his personal virtues and Prophetic qualities.

The Old and New Testaments, despite the questionable authenticity of their current versions, still contain references to Prophet Muhammad. We have quoted some of these. If, one day, the original copies or the

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least altered copies of the Torah and the Gospel are discovered, they will contain explicit references to the last Messenger. This may be deduced from the Traditions that say Christianity will be purified of its borrowed elements.

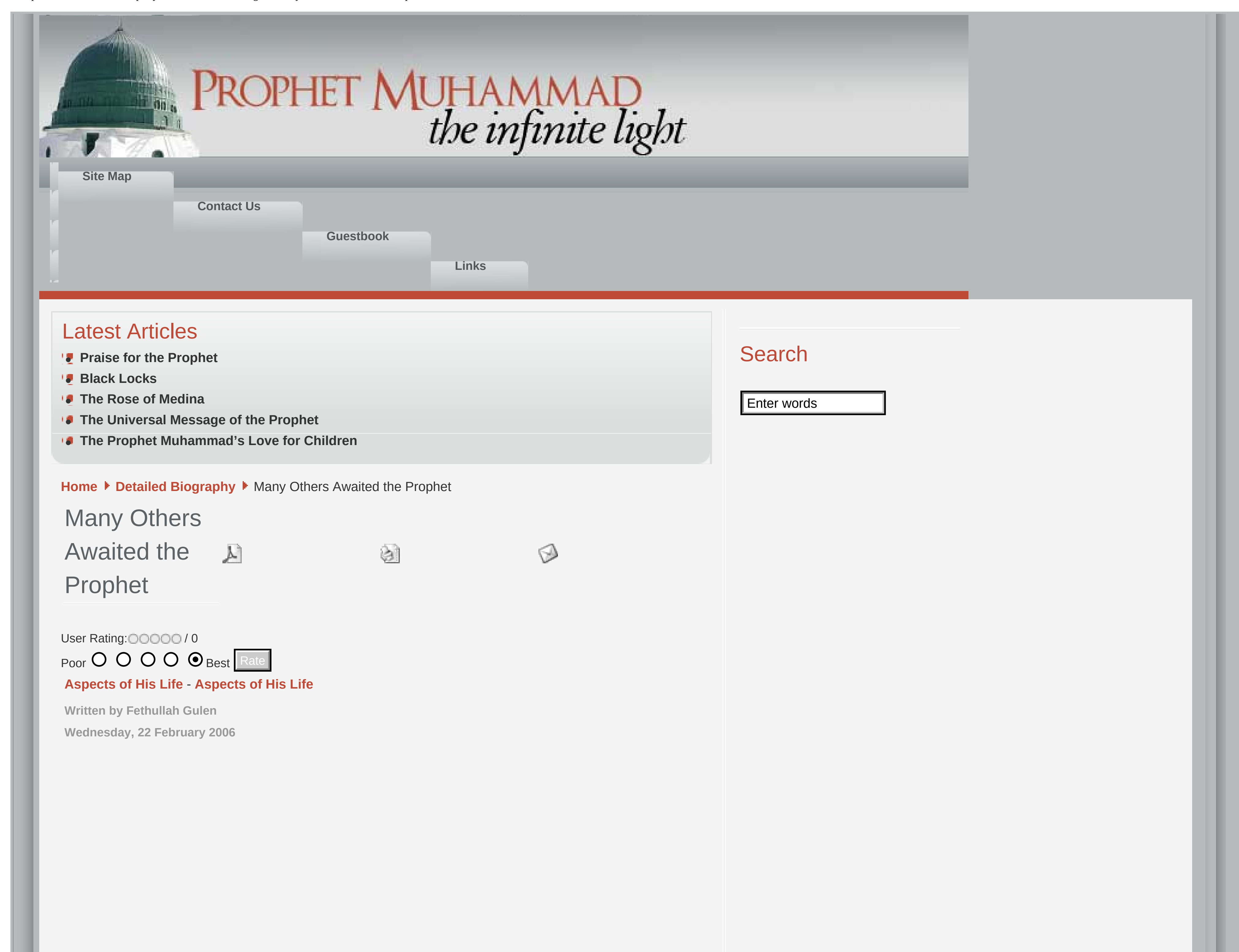
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"Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, unveiled the transitory nature of this world and death, and showed the grave to be a waiting room opening onto the realm of eternal happiness. He led every heart seeking happiness, regardless of place or time, to the fountain of Khadr, and enabled them to drink the elixir of immortality."
-Fethullah Gulen

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Many Others Awaited the Prophet

Aspects of His Life - Aspects of His Life

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

Owing to the numerous predictions of his coming, eve-ryone was waiting for Prophet Muhammad. In that dark era of human history, humanity was waiting for one who would destroy unbelief and breathe new life into the world. Judaism and Christianity, being God-revealed religions in origin, had no more to offer. Those who had studied the old books without prejudice, especially the monk Bahira, were waiting for him to come.

Many Makkans also were waiting, one of the foremost being Zayd ibn 'Amr, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab's uncle. He had rejected idolatry, led a pure life, and used to address people as follows: "There's no good in the idols you worship. I know of a religion that will soon be taught and spread. It will be proclaimed no later than a few years from now, but I don't know whether I'll live long enough to witness it."

According to 'Amr ibn Rabi'a, Zayd gave a detailed description of the expected Prophet:

I am expecting a Prophet who is about to come. He will appear among Ishmael's descendants and 'Abd al-Muttalib's grandsons. He is of middle height, neither too tall nor too short. His hair is neither curly nor straight. His name is Ahmad. His birthplace is Makka. His people will force him to leave Makka, and he will emigrate to Yathrib (Madina), where his religion will spread. I have traveled from place to place searching for Abraham's religion. However, all the Jewish and Christian scholars I spoke to advised me to wait for him. He is the Last Prophet; no Prophet will come after him. I may not live long enough to see him, but I have believed in him.

At the end of his introduction, Zayd told 'Amr ibn Rabi'a: "If you live long enough to see him, greet him for me." Years passed before Prophet Muhammad declared his Prophethood. 'Amr ibn Rabi'a, having declared his faith to the Prophet, explained what Zayd had told him and conveyed his greetings. Muhammad returned his greetings and added: "I saw Zayd in Paradise, trailing his robes." [1]

Among those seeking the truth was Waraqa ibn Nawfal, a Christian scholar and paternal cousin of Khadija, wife of Muhammad. When the first Revelation came to Prophet Muhammad, Khadija told Waraqa what had happened. Waraqa replied: "Muhammad is a truthful man. What he saw is that which occurs at the beginning of Prophethood. The being who came to him is Gabriel, who also came to Moses and Jesus. Muhammad will be a Prophet. If I live long enough to witness his declaration of Prophethood, I will believe in him and support him." [2]

One of those seeking the Last Prophet was the Jew 'Abd Allah ibn Salam. The Jews had such confidence in him that they called him "the lord, son of a lord." His greatness equaled that of even the greatest Companions, such as Abu Bakr and 'Umar, and God would consider his testimony to the Qur'an equal to the testimony of a people: Say: "Have you considered? If it be from God, and you do not believe in it, and a witness from among the Children of Israel bears witness to its like, and believes, and you wax proud, God guides not the people of the evildoers." (46:10)

This great Companion describes how he found the Prophet:

When God's Messenger emigrated to Madina, I went to see him, as did everyone else. He was sitting amidst a group of people when I went in, and saying: "Give food to others and greet them." His speech was so sweet and his face so charming that I said to myself: "I swear by God that one with such a face cannot lie." Without delay I declared my belief in him. [3]

The Jews and Christians of that time recognized God's Messenger. As stated in the Qur'an, They

recognize him as they recognize their sons (2:146). After his conversion, 'Umar asked 'Abd Allah ibn Salam if he had recognized God's Messenger. "I recognized him," Ibn Salam answered, and added: "I may doubt my children—my wife might have deceived me; but I have no doubt about God's Messenger being the Last Prophet." [4]

Although the Jews and Christians recognized him, most envied him and, because of their prejudice and envy, did not believe:

When there came to them a Book from God confirming what was with them—and they aforetime prayed for victory over the unbelievers—when there came to them what they recognized, they disbelieved in it; and the curse of God is on the unbelievers. (2:89)

After his conversion, 'Abd Allah ibn Salam said to God's Messenger: "O Messenger of God, hide me in a corner and then summon all the Jewish scholars in Madina to ask about me and my father. Their assessment will certainly be positive. Then let me come out to declare my conversion." God's Messenger accepted this suggestion. Ibn Salam hid in a corner and, when the Jewish scholars gathered, God's Messenger asked them what they thought of Ibn Salam and his father. All of them answered: "They are among our noblest and most learned people." Upon this, God's Messenger asked again: "How would you react if he affirms me?" They responded: "It is impossible that he will affirm you!" Ibn Salam then came out and declared his conversion, whereupon the Jewish scholars immediately changed their attitude and retorted: "Ibn Salam is the most wicked among us, and the son of the most wicked." [5]

Prophet Muhammad was one who had been sought for centuries. Salman al-Farisi was one of those seekers. Originally a Magian (a fire worshipper), he had left his native Persia due to his burning desire to find the eternal truth. Before embracing Islam, he worked for several Christian monks, the last of whom advised Salman on his deathbed:

Son, there is nobody left to whom I can commend you. But according to what we read in our books, the Last Prophet is about to appear. He will come with the pure creed of Abraham and will appear in the place to which Abraham migrated. Nevertheless, he will emigrate to another place and settle there. There are explicit signs of his Prophethood. For example, he will not eat of charity but will accept gifts, and the seal of Prophethood will be between his shoulders.

Now, let Salman narrate the rest of his story: I joined a caravan heading for the place mentioned by the late monk. When we arrived at Wadi al-Qura', they sold me to a Jew as a slave. When I saw gardens of date palms, I thought the Prophet would emigrate to this place. While I was working there, another Jew from the Banu Qurayza bought me and took me to Madina. I began working in his datepalm garden. There was no news yet of God's Messenger. However, one day I was harvesting dates when a cousin of my Jewish owner came up hurriedly. He said in great anger: "Damn itl! The people are flocking to Quba. A man from Makka, who claims Prophethood, has come. They think he's a real Prophet."

I began to tremble with excitement. I climbed down from the tree and asked: "What are you talking about?" My owner saw my excitement and slapped my face with the back of his hand, saying: "It doesn't concern you, mind your own business!"

On the same day, as the sun set, I went to him in Quba and gave him as alms the food I had brought with me. God's Mes-senger did not touch it, but said to those around him: "Help yourself to this." I told myself: "This is the first sign." On another occasion I gave him something as a gift. He accepted it and ate it with his Companions. "This is the second sign," I told myself.

Quote

“It was the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, who rejected indolence and the lazy and esteemed labor as a mode of worship and applauded the hard-working. He directed his followers to horizons beyond the age in which they lived and taught them how they cold be the element of balance in of balance in the world.”
-Fethullah Gulen

Once, I attended the funeral for a deceased Companion. I came close to God's Messenger in the cemetery. After greeting him, I stood behind him in the hope of seeing the Seal of Prophethood. His shoulders were bare, and the seal was just as the monk had described it. I couldn't help kissing it in tears, after which I told him my story. He was very pleased and wanted his Companions to hear my story. [6]

People who sincerely sought him found him. Whoever seeks him will find him, whereas those who remain obstinant and ruled by their evil-commanding selves will drown in unbelief and hypocrisy. Mughira ibn Shu'ba narrates:

One day I was with Abu Jahl in Makka. God's Messenger came over and invited us to accept Islam. Abu Jahl rebuked him, saying: "If you are doing this so that we will testify be-fore God in the other world that you performed your mission of Prophethood, we will do it. Leave us then, O man, to ourselves!" When God's Messenger left us, I asked Abu Jahl if he admitted Muhammad's Prophethood. He said that he did, and then added: "I know he is truly a Prophet. Nevertheless, we compete with the Hashimites in everything. They have been boasting of providing food and water to the pilgrims. Now if they begin to boast of having a Prophet, I won't be able to en-dure it at all." [7]

This is typical of the thoughts cherished by the Abu Jahls of the past and the present. Intelligent people who are not prejudiced and whose willpower is not paralyzed cannot help but believe in Islam and God's Messenger. In this respect, God says to His holy Messenger: We know well that their talk grieves you; in truth they deny not you, but it is the signs of God that the evildoers condemn (6:33).

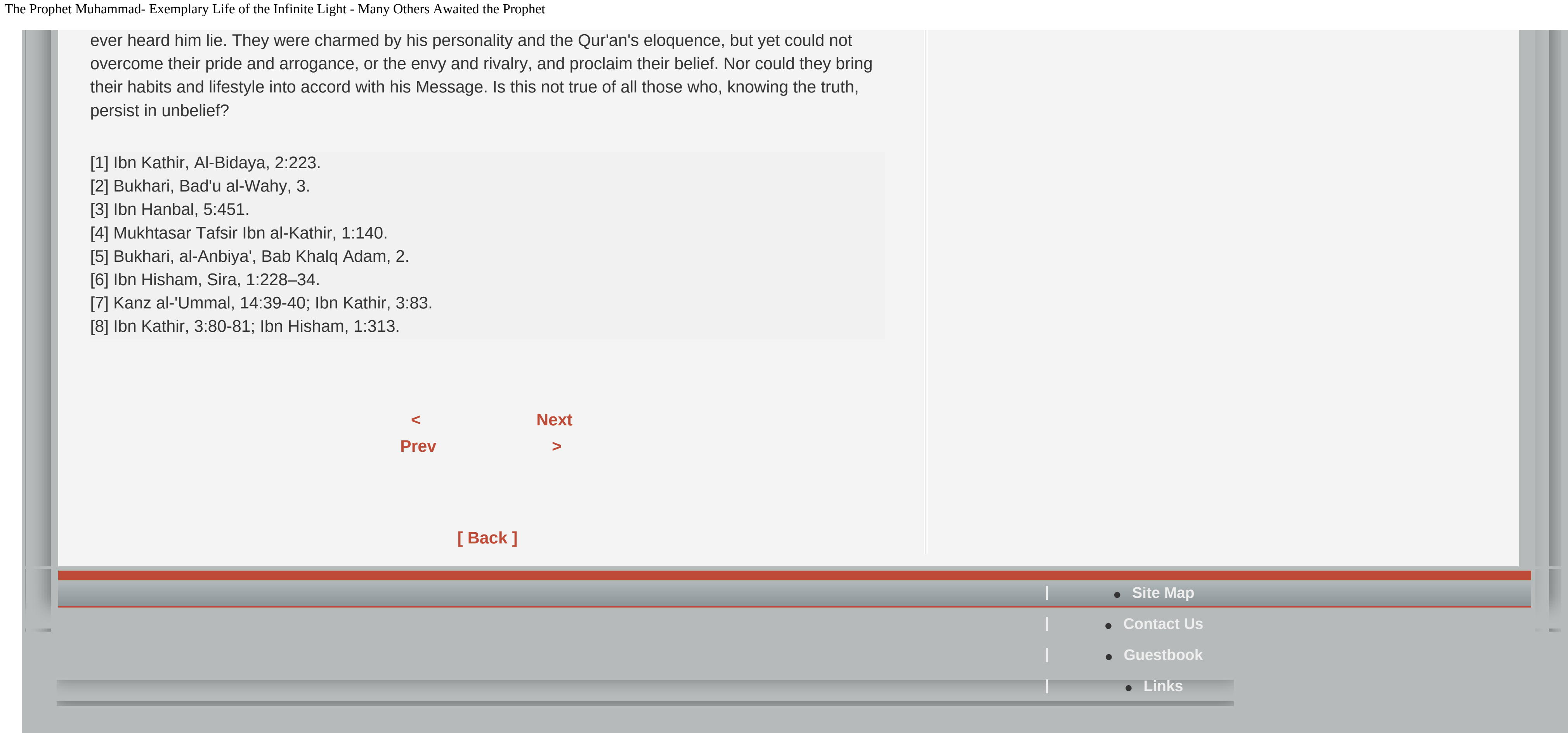
How could they accuse him of lying, for he was known by everybody as al-Amin (the truthful one)? The testimony of one of his bitterest enemies, 'Utba ibn Abi Rabi'a, proves that even his enemies admitted his truthfulness.

The Qurayshi leaders met to discuss how to prevent the spread of Islam. They decided to send 'Utba to God's Messenger. 'Utba went with the hope of persuading him to stop. He asked: "Who is better, O Muhammad, you or your father?" God's Messenger did not answer, probably because silence is the best answer to such an absurd question. 'Utba continued: "If your father was better than you, he cannot have been following the religion you are now preaching. If, by contrast, you are better than your father, then I am ready to listen to what you have to say."

God's Messenger inquired: "Is that all you intend to say?" 'Utba said that it was, and fell silent. Then, God's Messenger knelt and began reciting from Sura al-Fussilat. By the time he reached: But if they turn away, then "I warn you of a thunderbolt [as fell in times past upon the tribes] of 'Ad and Thamud" (41:13), 'Utba was trembling as if caught by fever. He had to put his hand on the lips of God's Messenger and said: "Please stop, for the sake of the God in whom you believe!" 'Utba returned home bewildered.

The Qurayshi leaders were waiting for him anxiously. Fearing that 'Utba might have accepted Islam, Abu Jahl knocked at his door and, when admitted, angered 'Utba by saying: "I heard Muhammad treated you very generously and feasted you, and in return you believed in him. This is what the people are saying." Angrily, "Utba replied: "You know I don't need his feating. I am richer than all of you. But his words shook me. They weren't poetry, nor did they resemble those of a soothsayer. I don't know how I should respond. He's a truthful person. While I was listening to his recitation, I feared that what happened to 'Ad and Thamud might happen to us." [8]

They had been expecting a Prophet for a long time. Everybody knew al-Amin's character, and no one had



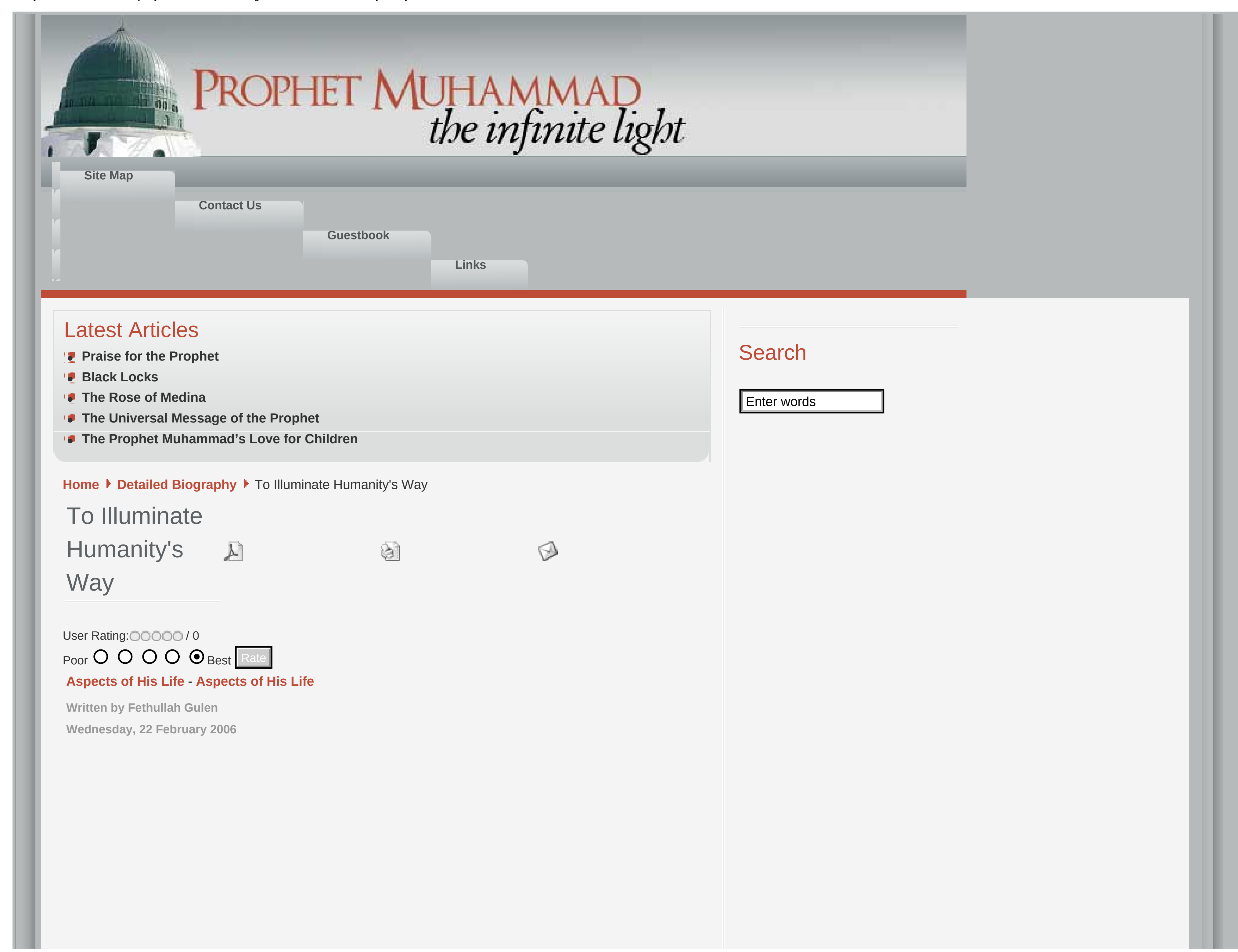
ever heard him lie. They were charmed by his personality and the Qur'an's eloquence, but yet could not overcome their pride and arrogance, or the envy and rivalry, and proclaim their belief. Nor could they bring their habits and lifestyle into accord with his Message. Is this not true of all those who, knowing the truth, persist in unbelief?

[1] Ibn Kathir, Al-Bidaya, 2:223.
[2] Bukhari, Bad'u al-Wahy, 3.
[3] Ibn Hanbal, 5:451.
[4] Mukhtasar Tafsir Ibn al-Kathir, 1:140.
[5] Bukhari, al-Anbiya', Bab Khalq Adam, 2.
[6] Ibn Hisham, Sira, 1:228–34.
[7] Kanz al-'Ummal, 14:39-40; Ibn Kathir, 3:83.
[8] Ibn Kathir, 3:80-81; Ibn Hisham, 1:313.

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To Illuminate Humanity's Way

Aspects of His Life - **Aspects of His Life**

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

Today, our greatest problem is that many people do not recognize Prophet Muhammad, and that others neglect or refuse to follow his way. God sent Muhammad, as He sent all previous Prophets, to illuminate our way:

God was gracious to the believers when He raised up among them a Messenger from themselves who recites to them the verses (of His Book) and shows them His signs [in their selves and in the universe], purifies them [of their sins and deviations], and instructs them in the Book and the Wisdom. They were evidently in manifest misguidance before. (3:164)

God sent Messengers to guide people to the truth and so they could be purified of sin. Those who were enlightened by the Messengers found the way to the Divine Presence and attained the highest rank of humanity. In the words of Ibrahim Haqqi: "God declared that He could not be contained by the Heavens and Earth. He can be known and reached only through hearts." This is why Messengers led humanity to the knowledge of God.

Those who follow this guidance are touched by Him in their innermost selves, whether it is called heart, soul, or conscience, for only that can grasp God in His entirety. Minds cannot comprehend Him, and philosophy cannot reach Him. Therefore, the Prophets purified souls so they could be mirrors in which God might manifest Himself. Prophet Muhammad left us the Qur'an and Sunna to show us how to live in a way that fulfills the purpose for which the Prophets were sent.

Here, it is necessary to emphasize three points. First, Prophets were not ordinary men; rather, they were chosen men through whom God manifested Himself. God chose them and paid great attention to their upbringing so that they always would seek to gain His approval. Like his predecessors, Prophet Muhammad always pursued God's good pleasure. His last words were: "To Rafiq al-A'la (the Highest Abode)." His wife 'A'isha gives the following account of his last moments:

I was with him during his last moments. Whenever he became ill, he would ask me to pray for him and, expecting my prayer to be accepted through the blessing of his auspicious hand, I held his hand and prayed. During his last illness, I wanted to do the same and pray, when he suddenly withdrew his hand and said: "To Rafiq al-A'la." [1]

Second, the world always contains successors who devote their lives to disseminating truth. They should seek what the Prophets sought, preach what the Prophets preached, and strictly follow the Prophets in enjoining good and forbidding evil.

Third, death is not total annihilation, but rather a changing of worlds without completely breaking away from this one. Prophets' deaths are special. In the case of martyrs, whose spiritual degree is lower than a Prophet's, the Qur'an says: Say not of those slain in God's way: "They are dead," they are alive but you understand not (2:154). So we cannot say that Prophets are dead. Thus Prophet Muhammad did not die as we understand this word; he only changed places and passed into another dimension or degree of life.

Those who can penetrate other dimensions with their inner faculties experience different dimensions of time and space, see different creatures, and look into things and events from different viewpoints. We consider things and events according to the stream in which we are. Those who rise high enough to see all dimensions of this stream have the scope of their sight enlarged as they ascend higher. Thus their capacity and judgment when considering matters is more comprehensive. Such people might be sitting with us and, at the same time, in the presence of God's Messenger. While praying with us, some may be leading the same prayer in the Hereafter before the angels. There is a particular class of saints called abdal

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“My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular level.”
-Michael H. Hart, THE 100: A

(substitutes). When one dies, he or she is replaced immediately with a new one who can see the Prophet whenever they wish. Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, a sixteenth-century scholar, once said: "I have seen God's Messenger 28 times while awake."

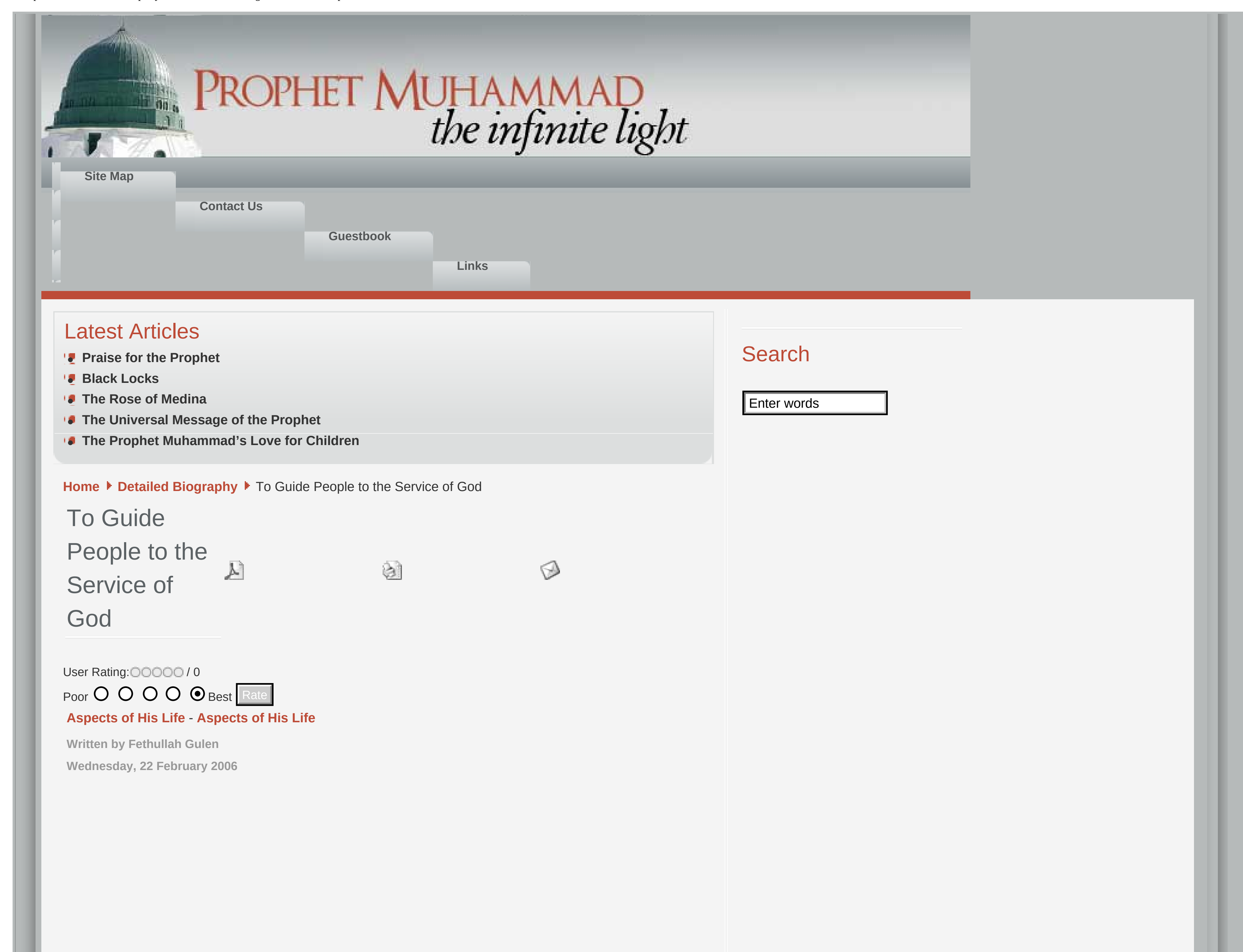
[1] Bukhari, Maghazi, 78; Muslim, Salam, 50,51; Abu Dawud, Tib, 19.

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Aspects of His Life - Aspects of His Life

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

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God declared in the Qur'an: I have not created jinn and humanity except to serve me (51:56).

We were not created only to eat, drink, and reproduce; these are natural facts of our life and natural needs. Our main purpose is to recognize and serve God. All Prophets were sent to show us how to do this: We never sent a Messenger before you except that We revealed to him: "There is no god but I, so serve Me" (21:25), and: We sent forth among every nation a Messenger, saying: "Serve God, and eschew taghut [idols and tyrants, Satan and his followers]." Then some of them God guided and some were justly disposed to misguidance (16:36).

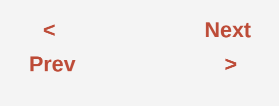
God sent Prophets to guide us to His service. Their missions were the same. However, whereas the earlier Prophets were sent to their own people and for a set period, Prophet Muhammad was sent as a mercy to humanity and jinn, and for all time.

According to an authentic narration, Ibn Mas'ud reports the following incident concerning the Prophet's preaching to the jinn:

Once God's Messenger and I went somewhere. He drew a circle around me and told me not to leave it until he returned. He left, and after a while some tumult broke out on the other side. I wondered whether something had happened to him, but as he had told me to stay put until he returned, I did so. Some time later, God's Messenger returned and I asked him about the uproar. He replied: "The jinn have believed and taken the oath of allegiance to me. When some of them insisted on unbelief, fighting broke out. The uproar you heard was the fighting. This implies that my life is about to end." [1]

God's Messenger used this last sentence to indicate that he had been sent to open the way to the guidance of humanity and jinn. Once this had been accomplished, there would be no reason for him to live, for he would have nothing more to accomplish. This also implies that believers should never neglect their essential duties here, and should pray, as instructed by God's Messenger: "O God, make me die if death is good for me; or else, make me live long as long as living is good for me!' [2]

[1] Tabari, Jami' al-Bayan, 24:33; Ibn Hanbal, 1:499.
[2] Bukhari, Marda, 19; Muslim, Dhikr, 10.


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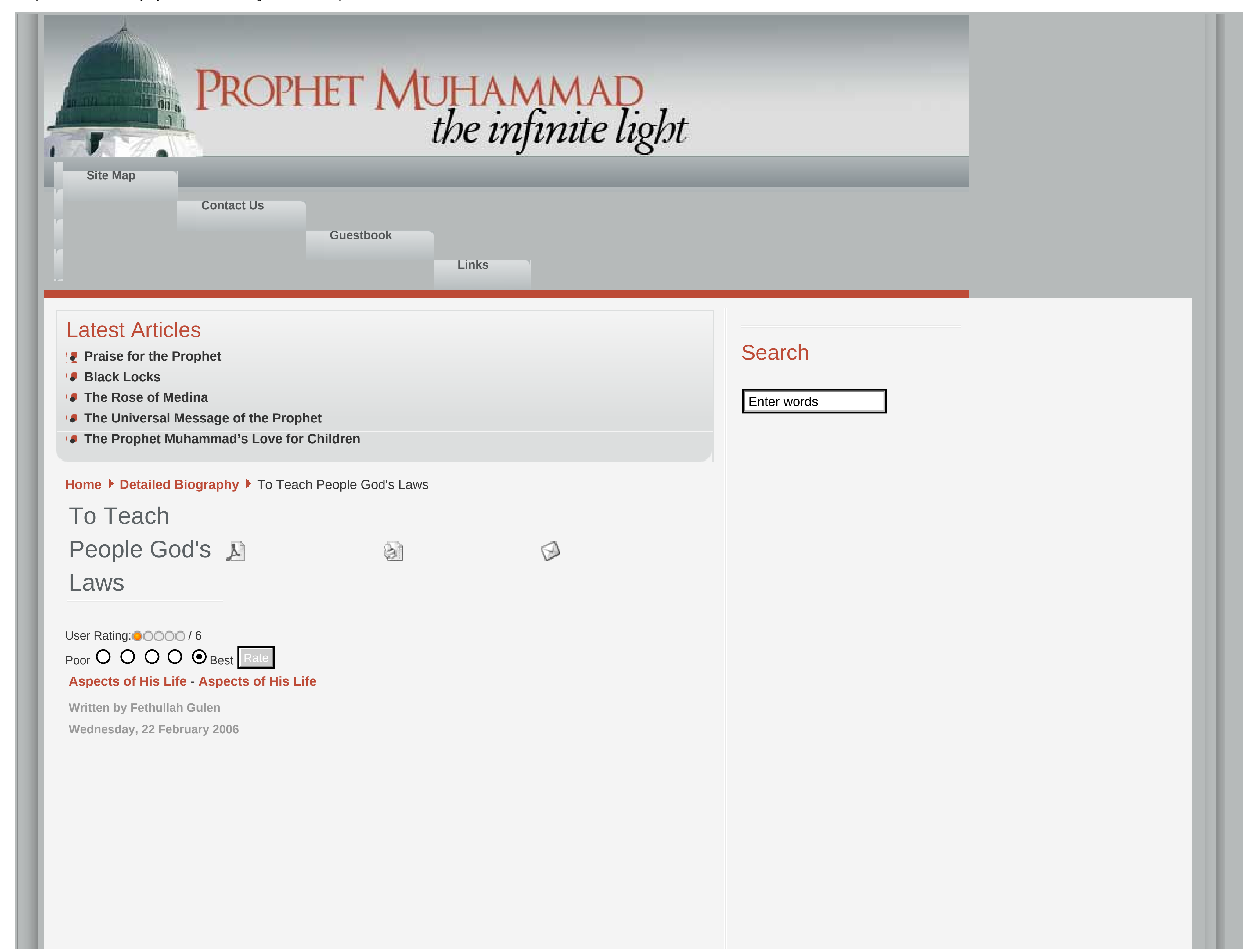
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"The personality of Muhammad, it is most difficult to get into the whole truth of it. Only a glimpse of it I can catch. What a dramatic succession of picturesque scenes! There is Muhammad, the Prophet. There is Muhammad, the Warrior; Muhammad, the Businessman; Muhammad, the Statesman; Muhammad, the Orator; Muhammad, the Reformer; Muhammad, the Refuge of Orphans; Muhammad, the Protector of Slaves; Muhammad, the Emancipator of Women; Muhammad, the Judge; Muhammad, the Saint. All in all these magnificent roles, in all these departments of human activities, he is alike a hero."

-K. S. RAMAKRISHNA RAO,
Muhammad, The Prophet of Is

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To Teach People God's Laws

Aspects of His Life - Aspects of His Life

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

Another purpose for sending Prophets is to reveal Divine Commandments (i.e., the five daily prayers, fasting Ramadan, paying zakat, and not indulging in any illicit sexual relations, alcohol, and gambling). This function is called Messengership. According to the Qur'an: They deliver the Messages of God and fear Him, and do not fear anyone except God (33:39). In addition, God told Muhammad:

O Messenger, deliver that which has been sent down to you from your Lord; for if you do not, you will have not performed His Messengership. God protects you against people; verily God will not guide the people of unbelief. (5:67)

The Messenger was sent to enlighten humanity about every dimension of human life. So, any neglect in delivering God's Message would amount to leaving humanity in darkness. For this reason, he continually sought unadulterated minds and hearts to which he could impart God's Message.

God's Messenger might have talked to people like Abu Bakr and 'Umar only a few times before they embraced Islam. But when it came to people like Abu Jahl, it was a different story. Each time he met them, he would say: "Proclaim there is no god but God and be saved." He would visit places where people gathered and make the same call. Occasional fairs were held in Makka and such nearby places as 'Arafat, Mina, Muzdalifah, and 'Aqabah—he would go to them every year, looking for receptive people.

When the Makkan polytheists' indifference was replaced with derision and mocking, and then with increasingly unbearable persecution, torture, and boycott, God's Messenger took Zayd ibn Haritha with him and went to Ta'if. But the people of this city also treated him harshly. The children lined up on either side of the road and threw stones at him. As he was wearing no armor, by the time he had left the town and found a tree under which to rest, he was bleeding profusely. He held up his hands and supplicated:

O God, unto You I complain of my frailty, lack of resources and significance before those people. O Most Merciful of the merciful, You are the Lord of the oppressed and are my Lord. To whom do You abandon me? To that stranger who looks askance and grimaces at me? Or to that enemy to whom You have given mastery over me? If Your indignation is not directed at me, I have no worry. But Your grace is much greater for me to wish for. I seek refuge in the light of Your Countenance, which illumines all darkness and by which the affairs of this life and the Hereafter have been rightly ordered, lest Your wrath alight upon me, or Your indignation descend upon me. I expect Your forgiveness until You are pleased. There is no resource or power but in You.

After saying this, he noticed that a tray had been placed before him. Addas, a Christian slave from Nineveh, had seen God's Messenger being stoned and tormented from the vineyard in which he was working. Putting some grapes on a tray, he had brought them to him. God's Messenger said "In the name of God" and began to eat. This surprised Addas, for it was the first time he had heard this phrase among the polytheists. So he asked God's Messenger who he was and why he had come to Ta'if. Upon hearing the answer, "I am Muhammad, from Makka, the Last Prophet," he said with tears in his eyes, Addas remarked: "God has made me find you," and embraced Islam. [1]

Prophet Muhammad was entirely focused on his mission. As a result, the circle of light broadened day by day, and the party of unbelief became more and more frustrated: They desire to extinguish with their mouths God's light; and God refuses but to perfect His light, though the unbelievers are averse (9:32). When no more could be accomplished in Makka, he emigrated to Madina and continued his mission there. Here he faced a different problem: established communities of hostile Jews and, eventually, a fifth column of Hypocrites who would ally themselves with his enemies.

In the twentythird year of his mission, he began to feel that his life was almost finished. He had performed the minor pilgrimage ('umrah) a few times, but never the major pilgrimage (hajj). He was able to do this during this final year. Ascending 'Arafat on the back of his camel, he preached what has become known as the Farewell Sermon. In it, he stressed that feuds and interest-based transactions were forbidden and that women have certain rights, and talked about family ties as well as tribal and national relationships.

A huge, tearful congregation listened to him. While speaking, he frequently asked them if he had communicated God's Message. With each positive reply, he raised his index finger toward Heaven and said: "O God, be witness!" In deep consciousness of Divine service, he might have thought: "God sent me to perform the duty of Messengership. Just as these people bore witness that I fulfilled this duty, I hope I may be regarded as having truly done it." He was prepared to meet God in perfect satisfaction.

[1] Ibn Hisham, Sira, 2:60-63; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidaya, 3:166.

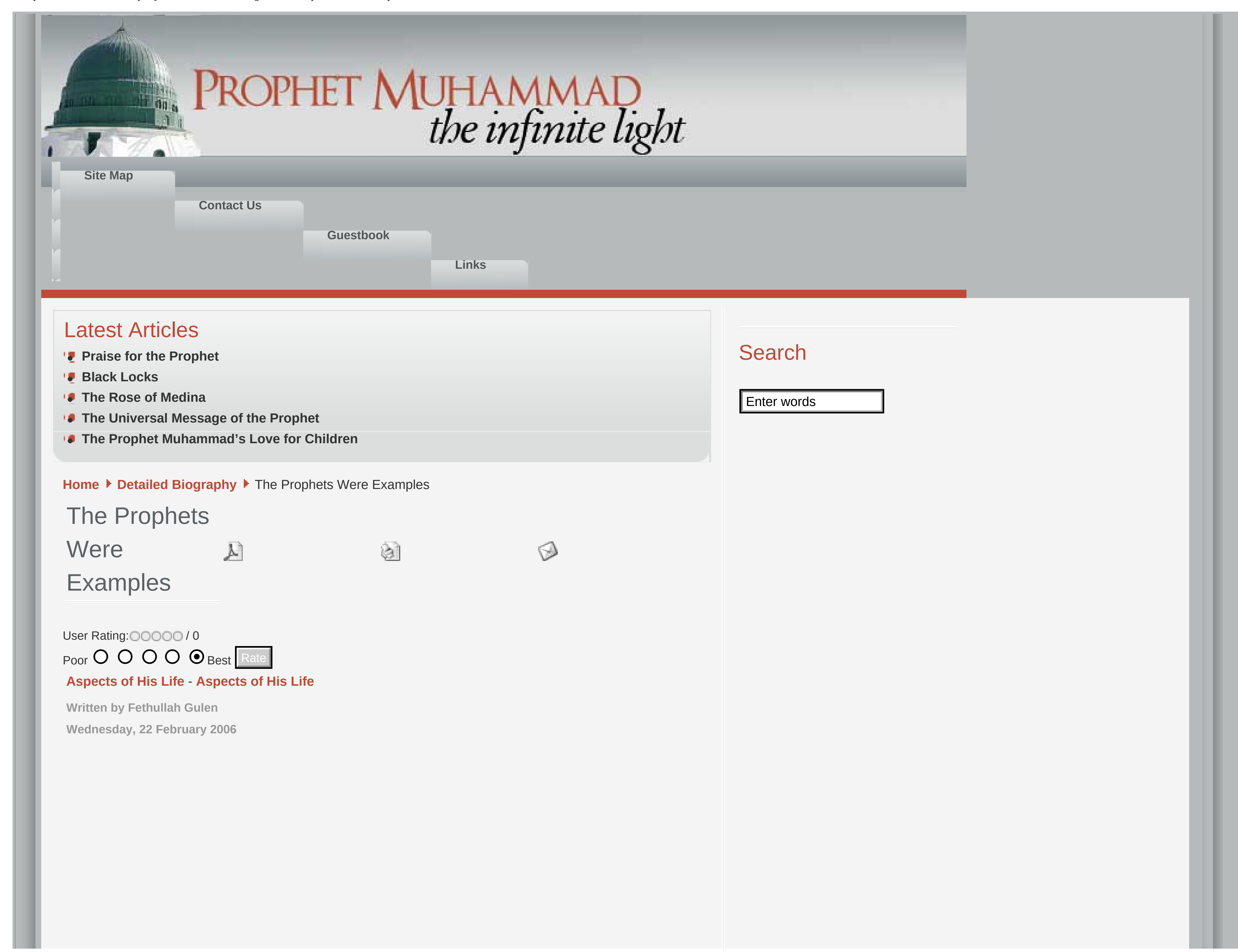
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Quote

"Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, unveiled the transitory nature of this world and death, and showed the grave to be a waiting room opening onto the realm of eternal happiness. He led every heart seeking happiness, regardless of place or time, to the fountain of Khadr, and enabled them to drink the elixir of immortality."
-Fethullah Gulen

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The Prophets Were Examples

Aspects of His Life - Aspects of His Life

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

Prophets were sent to serve as examples who must be followed consciously. After mentioning the Prophets in Surat al-An'am, God told His last Messenger: Those are they whom God has guided, so follow their guidance (6:90). In particular, we are told to follow Muhammad's example: You have a good example in God's Messenger for whoever hopes for God and the Last Day, and remembers God oft (33:21).

God's Messenger is our leader. Just as we pray as he prayed, we must exert ourselves to live as he lived. Those who followed him during the first Islamic century were real representatives of the true Islamic life. God's Messenger says of them:

Muslim armies will arrive, after me, at the gates of cities. They will be asked: "Did any of you see the Prophet?" The answer will be affirmative, and the gates will be opened for them. Those who succeed them also will perform jihad and be asked: "Did any of you see those who saw the Prophet?" They will reply in the affirmative, and the cities will be conquered by them. As for the third generation, its members will be asked: "Did any of you see those who saw the followers of the Prophet's Companions?" When this question is answered in the affirmative, their conquest will be successful. [1]

In another narration by Bukhari and Muslim, God's Messenger says: "The best of you are those who live in my period, then those who succeed them, and then those who follow them." [2]

Those three generations strictly followed the Prophet and, accordingly, were granted great victories throughout the world. Jesus had predicted them, saying: "The banners of the holy ones are in their hands." [3] These holy ones are the Companions of Muhammad and those who follow his way in every century.

In a Tradition, although with a weak chain of transmission, God's Messenger declares: "The pious scholars of my nation resemble the Prophets of the Children of Israel." [4] 'Umar submitted himself to God so sincerely that, as a servant of God, he was far more effective than had been expected. During his caliphate, Iran, Iraq, and Egypt were conquered. Muslim armies marched throughout a vast area, led by such great commanders as Abu 'Ubayda ibn al-Jarrah, Shurahbil ibn Hasana, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, 'Amr ibn al-'As, and Yazid ibn Abi Sufyan.

Jerusalem was conquered during his caliphate. When the Muslims' supreme commander asked its priests to submit the keys of the city, they answered: "We cannot see among you the man to whom we are to submit the keys." They had read in their religious books a description of who was qualified to receive the keys.

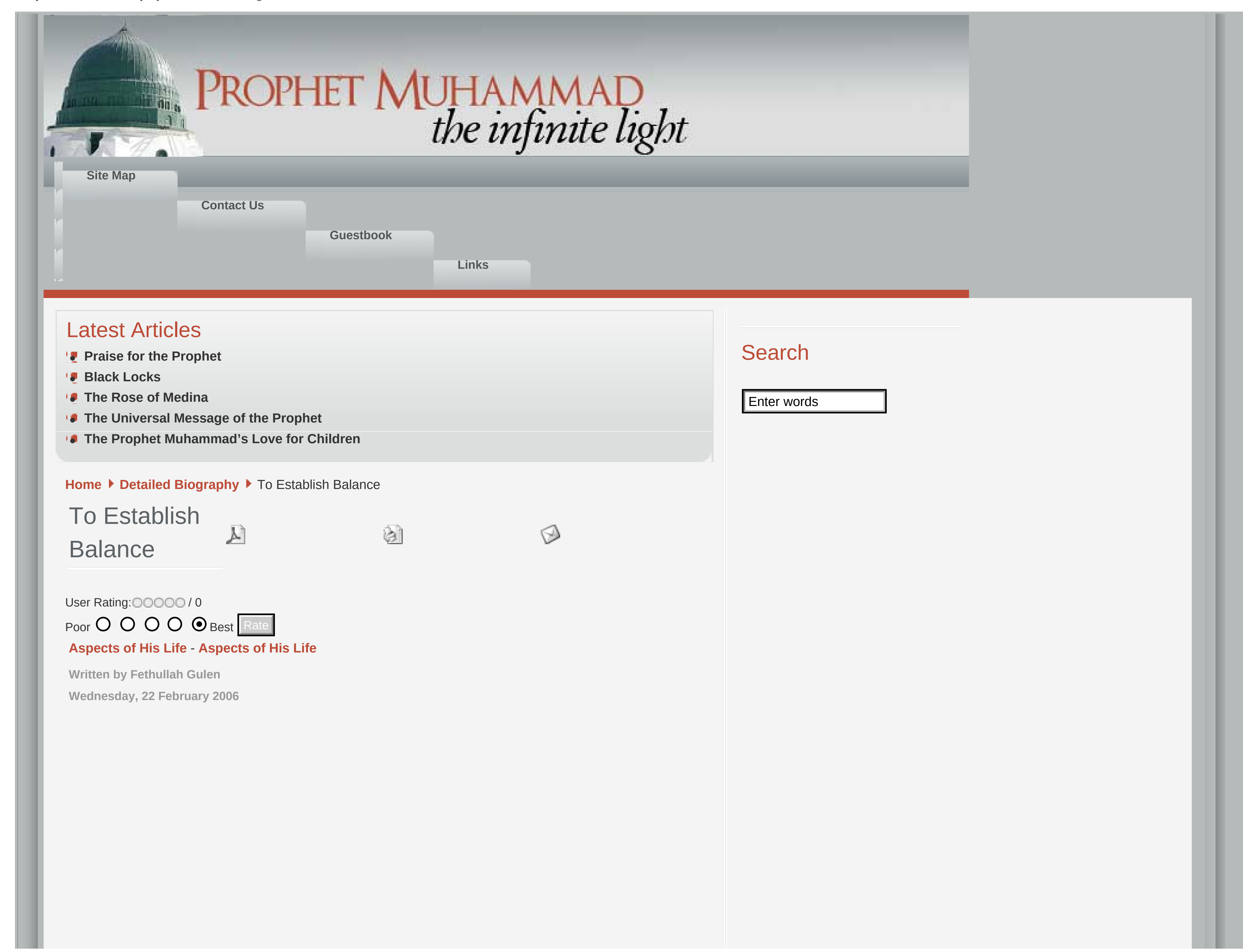
So the priests and Muslim commanders waited while 'Umar and his servant were riding a camel, by turns, toward Jerusalem. Although 'Umar ruled over lands twenty times the size of Turkey, he did not own a camel. He borrowed one from the state treasury and set out with his servant. When they approached the river Jordan, his waiting commanders on the river's other side were excited, praying: "O God, let 'Umar be the one riding when they reach the river, for these Romans are fond of pomp and display. They may not esteem us if they see the caliph pulling a camel ridden by a servant." But God had destined the latter scenario. When 'Umar approached, the priests noticed, among other things, several patches on his robe. This was the man described in their books, and so they gave him the keys of Jerusalem.

'Umar never deviated from the path of God's Messenger. While on his deathbed, after being fatally stabbed by a Magian slave, he refused food and water because he was too weak. However, he always prayed when it was time to do so, even if it caused his wounds to bleed. He would say: "Those who don't pray have nothing to do with Islam." An exemplary follower of God's Messenger, his own example would be

followed by succeeding generations.

1, No. 8, 1936

[1] Bukhari, Fada'il al-Ashab, 1; Muslim, Fada'il al-Sahaba, 208–9.
[2] Bukhari, ibid., 1; Muslim, ibid., 212.
[3] Ibrahim al-Halabi, Sira, 1:218.
[4] Ajluni, Kashf al-Khafa', 2:83.



To Establish Balance

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

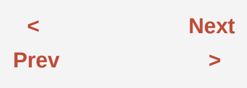
At a time when some people lived in monasteries and others drowned in luxury, Prophet Muhammad came with the Qur'anic instruction: Seek, amidst that which God has given you, the Last Abode, and do not forget your portion of the present world (28:77).

All Prophets, peace be upon them all, came to establish balance between the material and spiritual life, reason and soul, this world and the next, and indulgence and abstinence. While we should declare all that God has bestowed on us to show our gratitude and due praise for Him (And as for your Lord's blessing and bounty, declare it [93:11]), we must not forget that we will have to account for every good we enjoy (Then you shall be questioned that day concerning every good you enjoy [102:8]).

The Prophet inculcated this principle so deeply in his Companions' hearts that it could be seen in every aspect of their lives. For example, once when breaking fast during Ramadan, Abu Bakr, the first caliph, was offered a glass of cold water. He had just taken a sip when he suddenly burst into tears and stopped drinking. When asked why, he replied: "Once I was with God's Messenger. He acted as if he were pushing something with his hand and saying to it: 'Keep away from me!' I asked him what he was doing, and he replied: 'The world appeared to me in an ideal form, with all its pomp and luxury. I pushed it away, saying: "Leave me. You can't seduce me." It withdrew and said: "I can't conquer you, but I swear by God I'll captivate those who come after you."' After narrating this Tradition, Abu Bakr concluded: "Just now, I thought that the world tempted me with a glass of cold water, and I wept." [1]

Abu Bakr and most Companions lived a balanced life, despite the fact that they had every chance to live in comfort.

[1] Abu Nu'aym, Hilyat al-Awliya' wa Tabaqat al-Asfiya', 1:30-31.



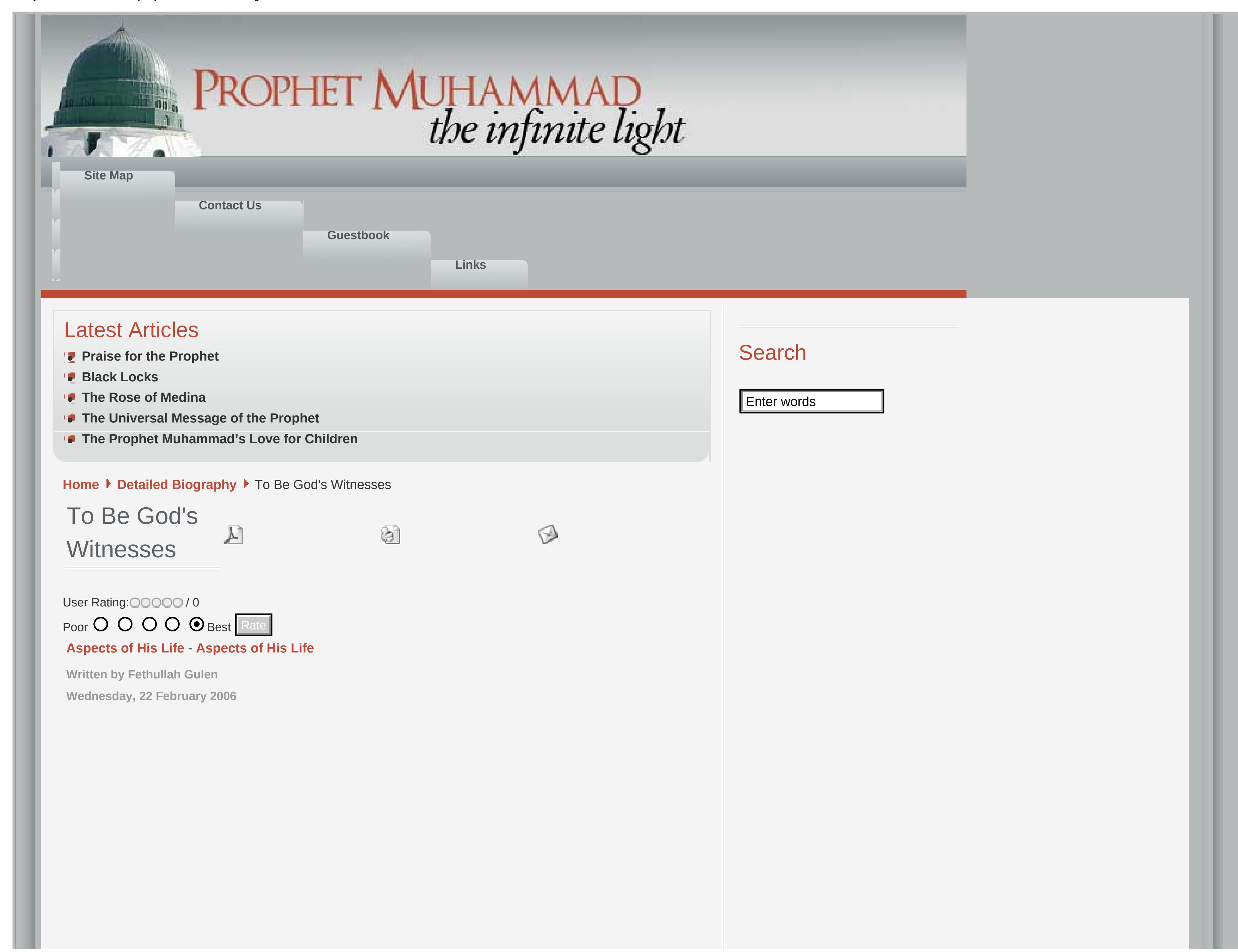
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“It was the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, who rejected indolence and the lazy and esteemed labor as a mode of worship and applauded the hard-working. He directed his followers to horizons beyond the age in which they lived and taught them how they cold be the element of balance in of balance in the world.”

-Fethullah Gulen



To Be God's Witnesses

Written by Fethullah Gulen

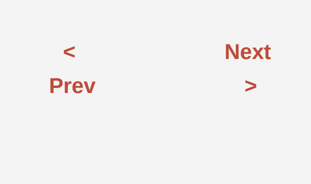
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Prophets also were sent so that people cannot plead ignorance in the Hereafter. Regarding this, the Qur'an says: Messengers bearing good tidings and warning, so that humanity might have no argument against God (4:165).

Humanity, who has followed many so-called guides or leaders only to be led astray, has received true guidance through the Prophets. These servants of God were created for a special mission. Already Prophets in their mothers' wombs, their births were extraordinary. Their lives resembled a beautiful symphony, perfectly harmonious and balanced. Their words were like sweet melodies that penetrated souls.

All of existence, animate or inanimate, hearkened to them. Trees and rocks would greet Prophet Muhammad, and he would answer them. In his well-known Qasidat al-Bur'a, Busiri says: "Trees answered his call, prostrating." When he called them, trees came to him. Both living beings and inanimate objects acquired meaning through his advent, existence became a "cosmos" out of "chaos," and each thing became a tongue glorifying God with praise: There is not a thing that does not glorify Him with praise, but you do not understand their glorification (17:44). The extraordinary harmony in the universe displays God's Existence and Unity. Nothing is created in vain and without purpose: Does humanity think it will be left aimless? (75:36).

If the Prophets had not been sent, we might have had an argument against being punished in the Hereafter. But, as the Qur'an states: We never punish until We have sent a Messenger (17:15), God must send Prophets so that people can distinguish good from evil. Thus, people cannot plead ignorance when they must defend their actions on the Day of Judgment.



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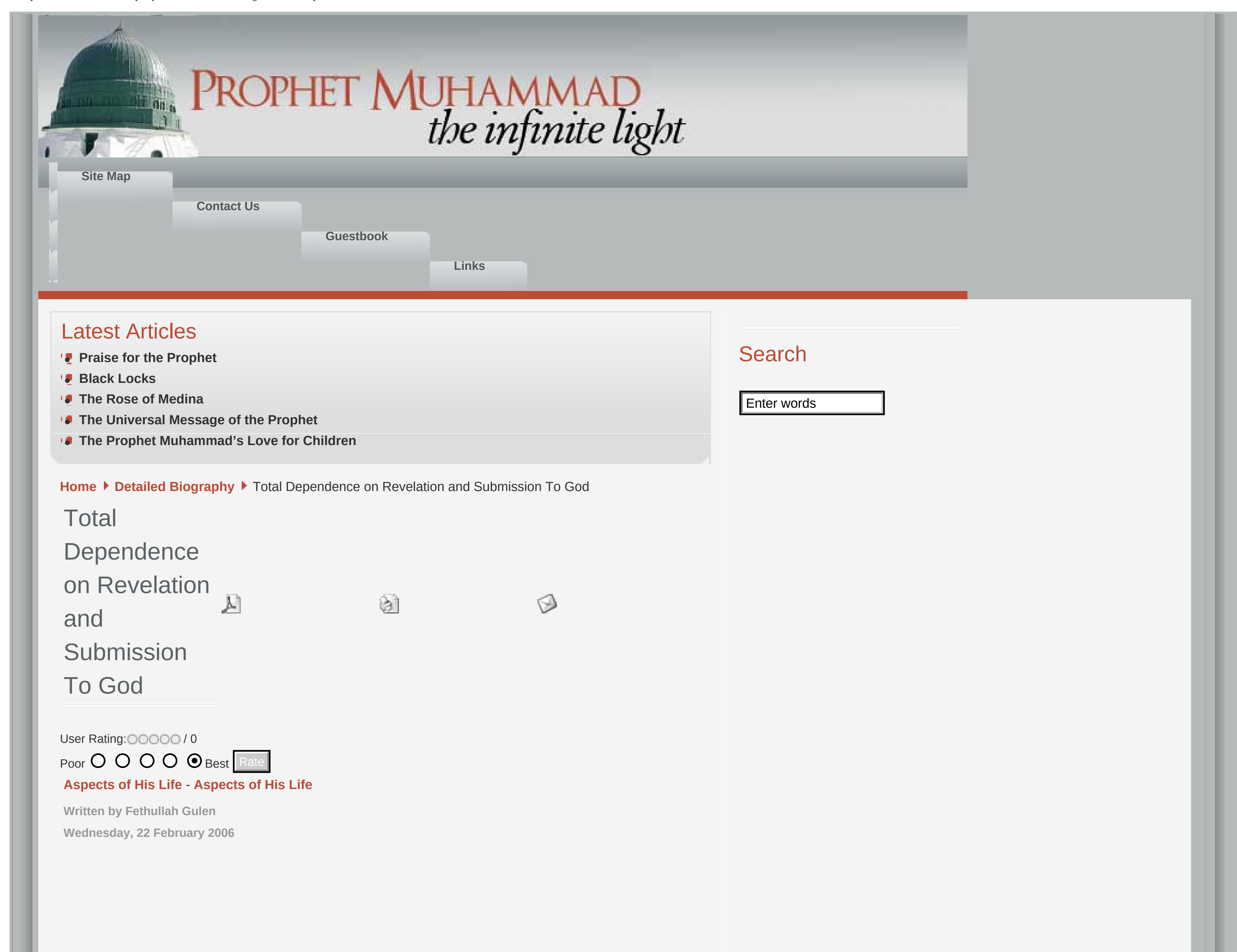
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"It was the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, who rejected indolence and the lazy and esteemed labor as a mode of worship and applauded the hard-working. He directed his followers to horizons beyond the age in which they lived and taught them how they cold be the element of balance in of balance in the world."
-Fethullah Gulen

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Total Dependence on Revelation and Submission To God

Aspects of His Life - Aspects of His Life

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

Although every Prophet was intelligent and endowed with a comprehensive understanding and a pure soul, these play no role in God's choice of a Prophet. Most Prophets, including Muhammad, were unlettered and therefore were taught by God. Prophet Muhammad, despite his illiteracy, had knowledge of the past and the future, and insight into every branch of knowledge. He did not attend any school or have any human teachers, yet even his enemies admitted (and still do) that he displayed perfect justice in family affairs, perfect competency in state administration, and perfect command of armies.

Prophets were specially brought up by God. To cite an example, the Last Prophet recalled: "I intended twice in my childhood to attend a wedding ceremony. On both occasions, I was overpowered by sleep half-way [and thus was protected against any sin I would later prohibit] [1]; and "While repairing the Ka'ba, prior to my Prophethood, I was carrying stones. As everyone did, I wrapped my garment's lower part over my shoulder to avoid injury. Part of my thigh was left uncovered. All of a sudden, the angel I had seen several times in my childhood appeared to me in all his majesty. I fell down and fainted. That was the first and last time I uncovered any part of my body that God ordered to be covered." [2]

Prophets were protected by God against all sins, for they were created for a special purpose. They were protected from going astray, for even a minor deviation could result in humanity's almost complete deviation.

Prophethood is distinguished by Divine Revelation: And thus have We revealed to you a spirit of Our command. You did not know what the Scripture was, nor what the faith. But We have made it a light whereby We guide whom We will of Our servants. And you, surely you guide unto a straight path (42:52). As a result, Prophets never spoke on their own accord: Nor does he speak of (his own) desire. It is naught but a Revelation revealed (53:3-4).

Prophet Muhammad, particularly when asked about the essentials of belief, would wait for Revelation. Sometimes the polytheists asked him to alter the Qur'an. But as it is a Divine Scripture whose wording and meaning belong completely to God, he would reply, as instructed by God: Say: "It is not for me to alter it of my own accord. I follow nothing, except what is revealed to me" (10:15).

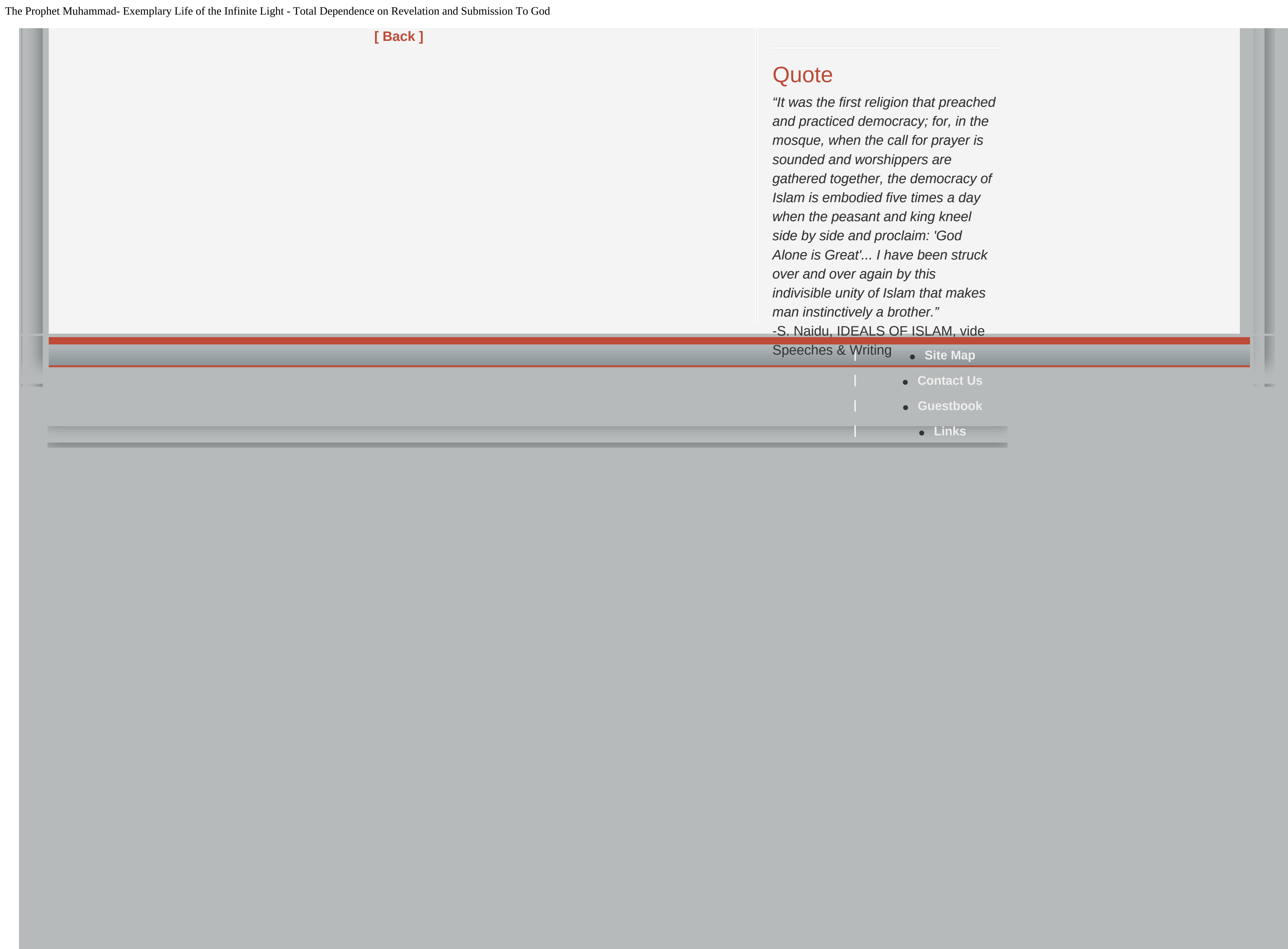
Prophets submitted themselves wholly to God, and fulfilled their mission solely because God commanded them to. They never compromised or deviated from their way in order to achieve success. When confronted with threats or seductive offers, they replied with words similar to those of the Prophet: "If you were even to put the sun in my right hand, and the moon in the left, I will never give up preaching my cause." He knew that the Qur'an is the Word of God, and so bore all hardship and opposition. [3]

[1] Ibn Kathir, Al-Bidaya, 2:350.
[2] Bukhari, Hajj, 42; Ibn Kathir, Al-Bidaya, 2:350.
[3] Ibn Hisham, Sira, 2:285.

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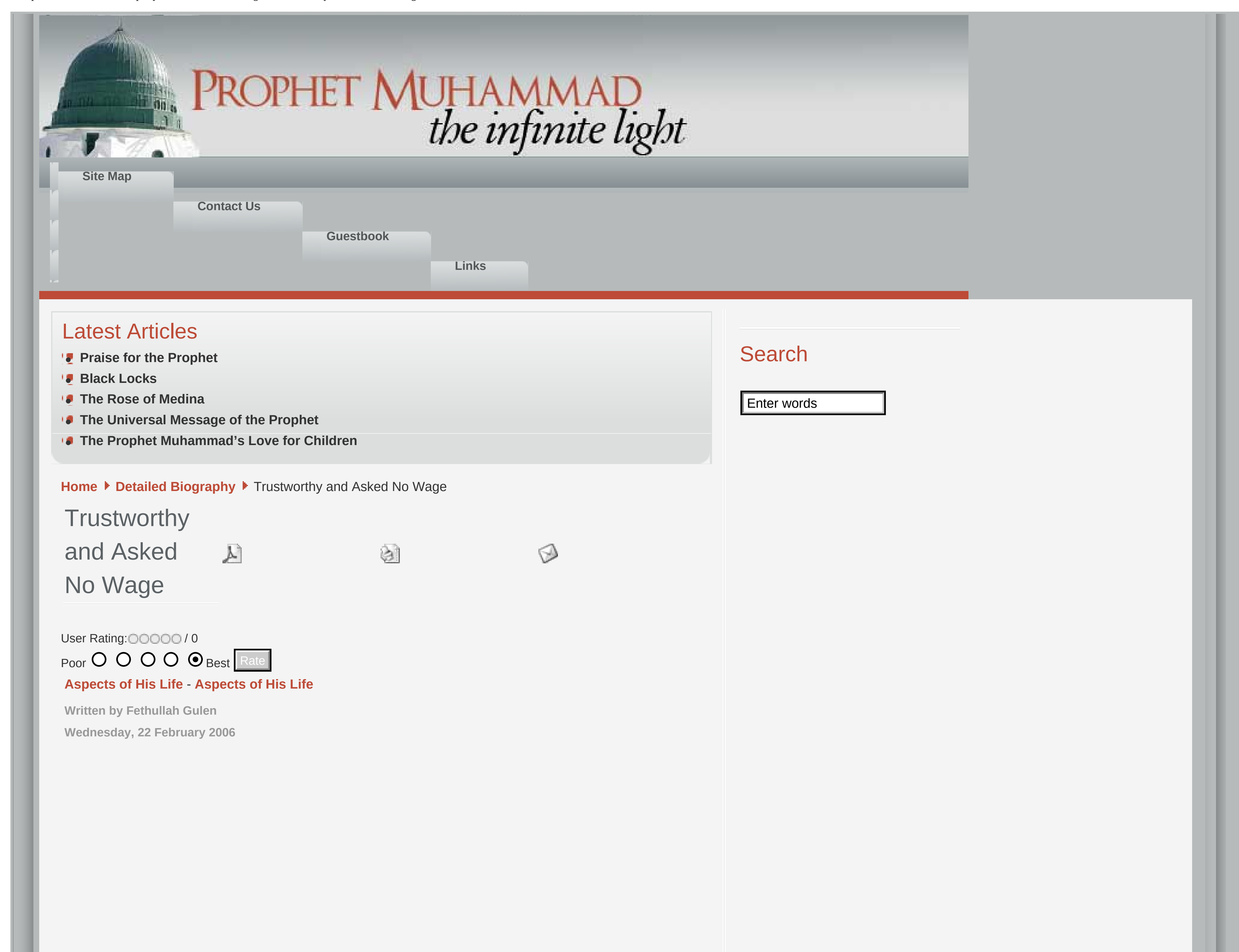
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“It was the first religion that preached and practiced democracy; for, in the mosque, when the call for prayer is sounded and worshippers are gathered together, the democracy of Islam is embodied five times a day when the peasant and king kneel side by side and proclaim: 'God Alone is Great'... I have been struck over and over again by this indivisible unity of Islam that makes man instinctively a brother.”

-S. Naidu, IDEALS OF ISLAM, vide Speeches & Writing

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Aspects of His Life - Aspects of His Life

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

Prophets were completely trustworthy and asked no wage for their services. This very important characteristic is mentioned five times in Surat al-Shu'ara'. All Prophets said the same thing: "I am for you a trustworthy Messenger, so serve you God, and obey you me. I ask of you no wage for this; my wage falls only upon the Lord of the Worlds" (26:107–9, 125–27, 143–45, 162–64, 178–80).

Among his own people, Prophet Muhammad was famous for his trustworthiness even before his proclamation of Prophethood. He was known as al-Amin (the Trustworthy). Like his predecessors, he asked no wage for calling to God.

Prophets never thought of material gain, spiritual reward, or even Paradise—they strove only for God's good pleasure and to see humanity guided to the truth. Prophet Muhammad was the foremost in this respect. As he devoted his life to humanity's welfare in this world, he will do so in the Place of Gathering. While everybody else will care only about themselves, he will prostrate before God, pray for the Muslims' salvation, and intercede with God on behalf of others. [1]

Those who intend to spread the perennial values of Islam should follow these practices. Any message based on an impure intention, regardless of eloquence, will have no effect on people. This point is frequently emphasized in the Qur'an: Follow such as ask no wage of you, that are right-guided (36:21).

Imam Busiri expresses the altruism, sincerity, and patience of God's Messenger in vivid language: "Mountains desired to run on his either side in heaps of gold, but he refused." The Messenger once said: "A day comes when I am hungry so as to endure it with patience; on another day I am full to praise my Lord, acquiring thus the reward of both patience and praising."

'A'isha reported that sometimes was no food was cooked for four successive days in their house. [2] Abu Hurayra also reports: "Once I went into the Prophet's room. He was praying while seated and groaning. I asked him if he was ill. He replied that he was too hungry to stand. I began to sob bitterly, but he stopped me, saying: "Don't cry, for one who endures hunger here will be safe from God's torment in the next." [3]

One day, he told Gabriel: "It has been several days since someone has lit a fire to cook food in the house of Muhammad's family An angel appeared and asked: "O Messenger of God, God greets you and asks if you would like to be a Prophet-king or a Prophet-slave?" He turned to Gabriel, who recommended humility. The Prophet raised his voice and replied: "I wish to be a Prophet-slave, who entreats God in hunger one day and thanks Him in satisfaction the next." [4]

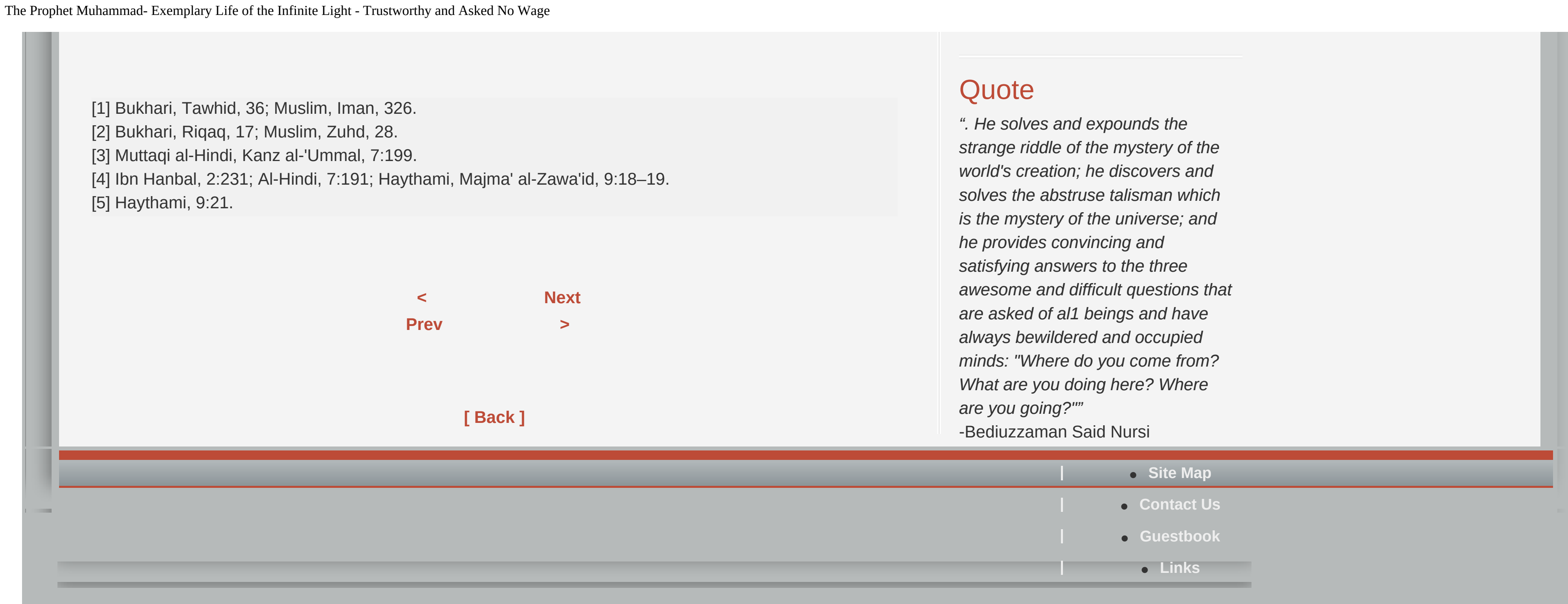
God's Messenger used to eat with slaves and servants. Once a woman saw him eating and remarked: "He's eating as if he were a slave." God's Messenger responded: "Could there be a better slave than me? I am a slave of God." [5]

God's Messenger is, by virtue of being a slave of God, our master and that of creation, as eloquently stated by Ghalib Dada:

> *An exalted king, the King of the Messengers, O my Master.*
> *You are an endless source of help for the helpless, O my Master.*
> *God honored you by swearing by your life in the Qur'an, O my Master.*
> *In the Divine Presence, you are the greatest, O my Master.*
> *You are the beloved, lauded and praised one of God, O my Master.*
> *Our "eternal" king you are, sent to us by God, O my Master.*

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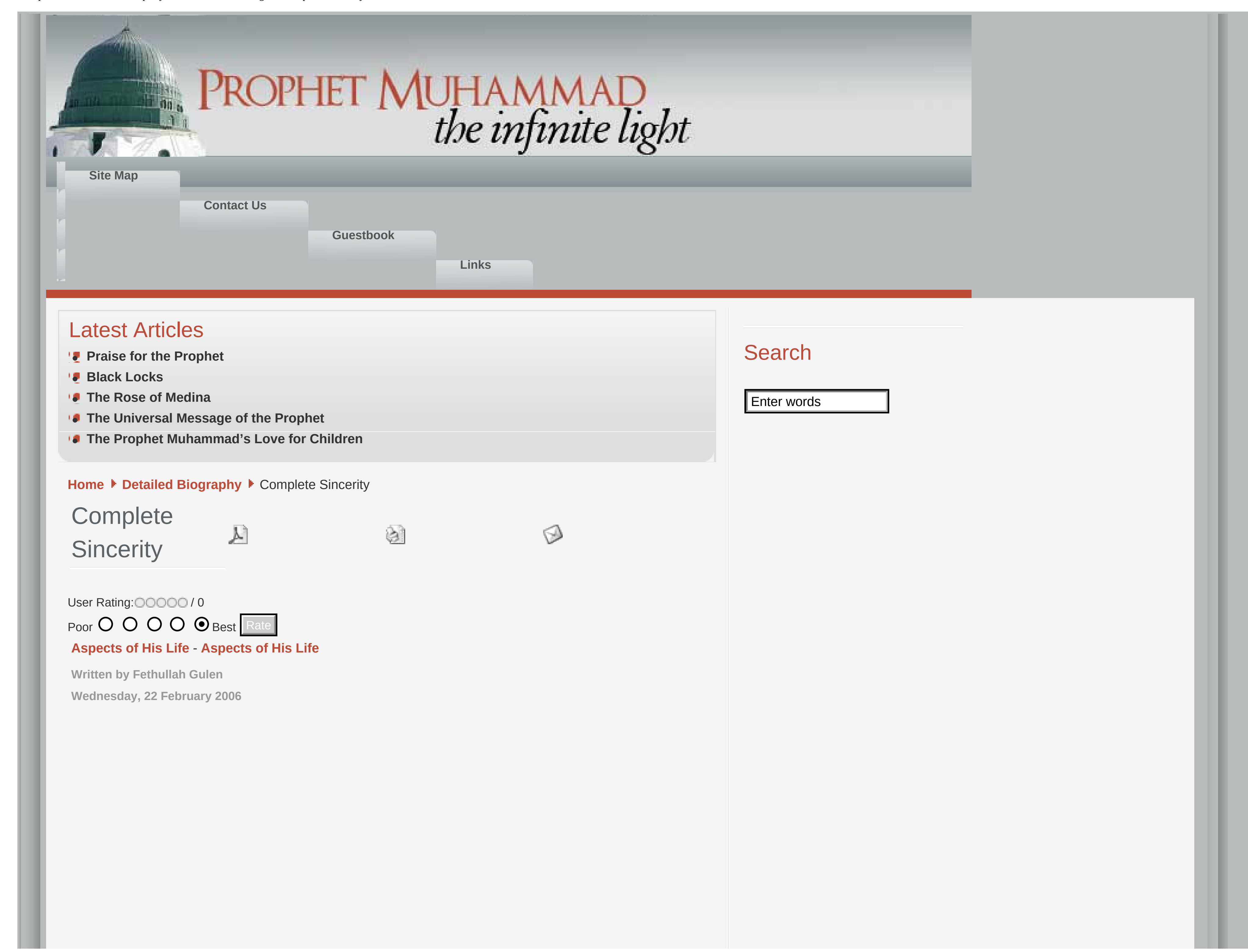


[1] Bukhari, Tawhid, 36; Muslim, Iman, 326.
[2] Bukhari, Riqaq, 17; Muslim, Zuhd, 28.
[3] Muttaqi al-Hindi, Kanz al-'Ummal, 7:199.
[4] Ibn Hanbal, 2:231; Al-Hindi, 7:191; Haythami, Majma' al-Zawa'id, 9:18–19.
[5] Haythami, 9:21.

Quote

". He solves and expounds the strange riddle of the mystery of the world's creation; he discovers and solves the abstruse talisman which is the mystery of the universe; and he provides convincing and satisfying answers to the three awesome and difficult questions that are asked of al1 beings and have always bewildered and occupied minds: "Where do you come from? What are you doing here? Where are you going?""

-Bediuzzaman Said Nursi



Complete Sincerity

Aspects of His Life - **Aspects of His Life**

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

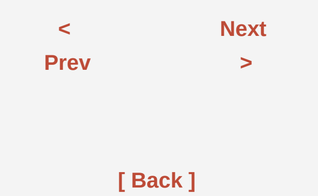
Another indispensable characteristic is sincerity, which in this context means "purity of intention, to do everything solely for the sake of God." We are told to worship God sincerely: They were commanded only to serve God, making the religion His sincerely, men of pure faith, and to perform the prayer, and pay the alms (98:5). God also mentions sincerity as the foremost attribute of the Prophets: And mention in the Book Moses; he was made sincere, and he was a Messenger, a Prophet (19:51).

We worship God only because we are His servants and He has told us to do so. Obeying Him allows us to secure His approval and be rewarded in the Hereafter. Said Nursi, the great twentieth-century Turkish thinker, said: "Do what you do only for God's sake, start for God's sake, work for God's sake, and act within the sphere of God's good approval." [1]

God's Last Prophet worshipped God so sincerely that people could say: "No one can remain as humble as he was at the beginning of his career or quest after attaining its height. Muhammad was an exception to this." He is so great and sublime that we still stand out of respect for him, although he used to warn his Companions: "When I come upon you, don't stand up as the Persians do (for their elders)." [2] Although his Companions had complete respect for him, he considered himself a poor slave of God. On the day he conquered Makka, he was the same as when he humbly had begun his mission. At the outset of his mission, he would sit and eat with the poor and slaves. As he entered Makka in triumph, he rode a mule in such deep submission and humility before God that his forehead touched its packsaddle. He was prostrating before God and taking refuge in Him from being a tyrannical, haughty conqueror.

God's Messenger had one intention: to please God and worship Him sincerely. He worshipped Him at a level of perfect goodness and sincerity, as he himself stated in a famous Tradition: "Perfect goodness or virtue is to worship God as if you were seeing Him, and while you see Him not, yet truly He sees you." [3]

[1] Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, The Words, The First Word, 5.
[2] Abu Dawud, Adab, 152; Ibn Hanbal, 5:253.
[3] Bukhari, Iman, 47; Muslim, Iman, 5:7.



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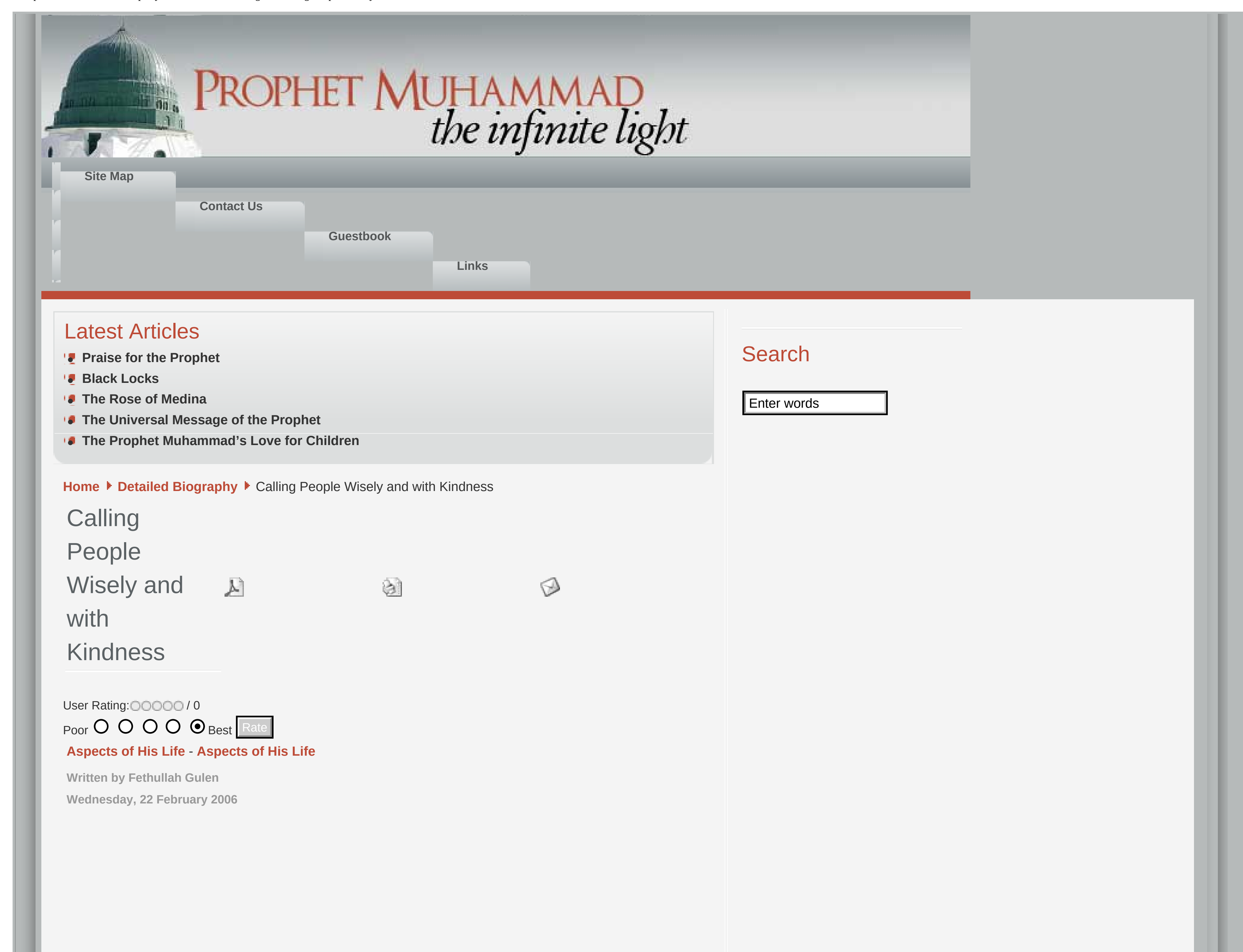
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"Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, called upon us to protect religion, life, reason, property and the integrity of family and lineage, and to strive for this purpose. In a remarkably balanced way, he proclaimed that no other duty could equal this struggle."

-Fethullah Gulen



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Calling People Wisely and with Kindness

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Aspects of His Life - **Aspects of His Life**

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

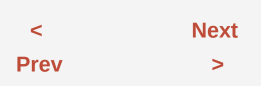
Another attribute of Prophets is calling people to the way of God with wisdom and fair exhortation. They never resorted to demagogy and dialectics, but acted and spoke with wisdom. God ordered His Last and Greatest Messenger: Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and reason with them in the best way (16:125).

People are more than just minds or hearts. We are complex beings with many faculties, including the mind, intellect, heart, and soul. All of our faculties, even the innermost ones, require satisfaction. The Prophets addressed all of them.

Those taught by the Prophets acquired certainty, and their view of things differed from those with limited external sight and devoid of insight and spiritual vision. Their conviction of religious truths was unshakable, and they were continually fed with Divine Revelation. They combined speech with action, knowledge with practice, and action with contemplation. 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, among others, would say: "If the veil of the Unseen were lifted up, my certainty would not increase." [1] There was no further degree of certainty left for them to attain.

The education given by the Prophets to their disciples, or the function of the Prophets, is described precisely: We have sent among you, of yourselves, a Messenger, to recite Our signs to you and to purify you, and to teach you the Book and Wisdom, and to teach you what you know not (2:151).

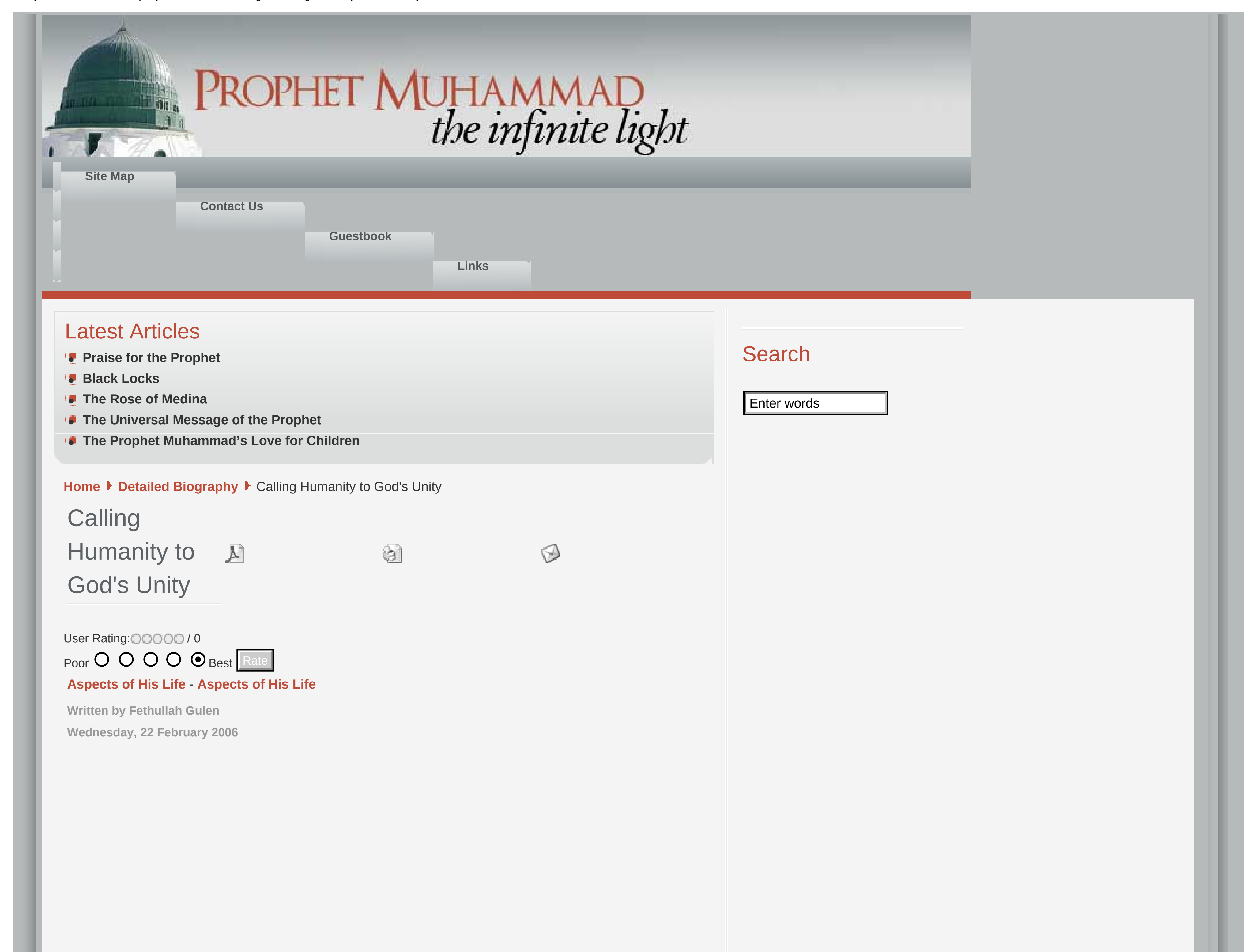
[1] 'Ali al-Qari, al-Asrar al-Marfu'ah, 286.



Quote

"The personality of Muhammad, it is most difficult to get into the whole truth of it. Only a glimpse of it I can catch. What a dramatic succession of picturesque scenes! There is Muhammad, the Prophet. There is Muhammad, the Warrior; Muhammad, the Businessman; Muhammad, the Statesman; Muhammad, the Orator; Muhammad, the Reformer; Muhammad, the Refuge of Orphans; Muhammad, the Protector of Slaves; Muhammad, the Emancipator of Women; Muhammad, the Judge; Muhammad, the Saint. All in all these magnificent roles, in all these departments of human activities, he is alike a hero."

-K. S. RAMAKRISHNA RAO, Muhammad, The Prophet of Is



Calling Humanity to God's Unity

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Aspects of His Life - **Aspects of His Life**

Written by Fethullah Gulen

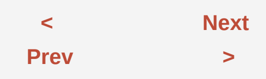
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The cornerstone of the Prophetic mission was to preach Divine Unity. All Prophets concentrated on this basic principle: O my people, serve God: You have no god other than He (11:84).

God has sent at least one Prophet to every people. The fact that all of them, regardless of time or place, agree on one basic principle shows that they did not speak or act on their own; rather, they did no more than teach the Message received from God. Philosophers and thinkers, no matter how great they may be, disagree among themselves because they depend on their own intellect and findings. Frequently, the same philosophical or sociological school contains different opinions.

Such a development was unknown among the Prophets, further evidence that they were taught by a Single, Eternal Teacher—God—and not guided by defective human reasoning. Such a unity of belief is also a strong evidence of Divine Unity, the fundamental principle of their mission, as declared by Muhammad: "The most meritorious of the words spoken by me and the Prophets before me is: 'There is no god but God, He is One, having no partners.'" [1]

[1] Imam Malik, Muwatta, Hajj, 246; Hindi, Kanz al-'Ummal, 5:73.



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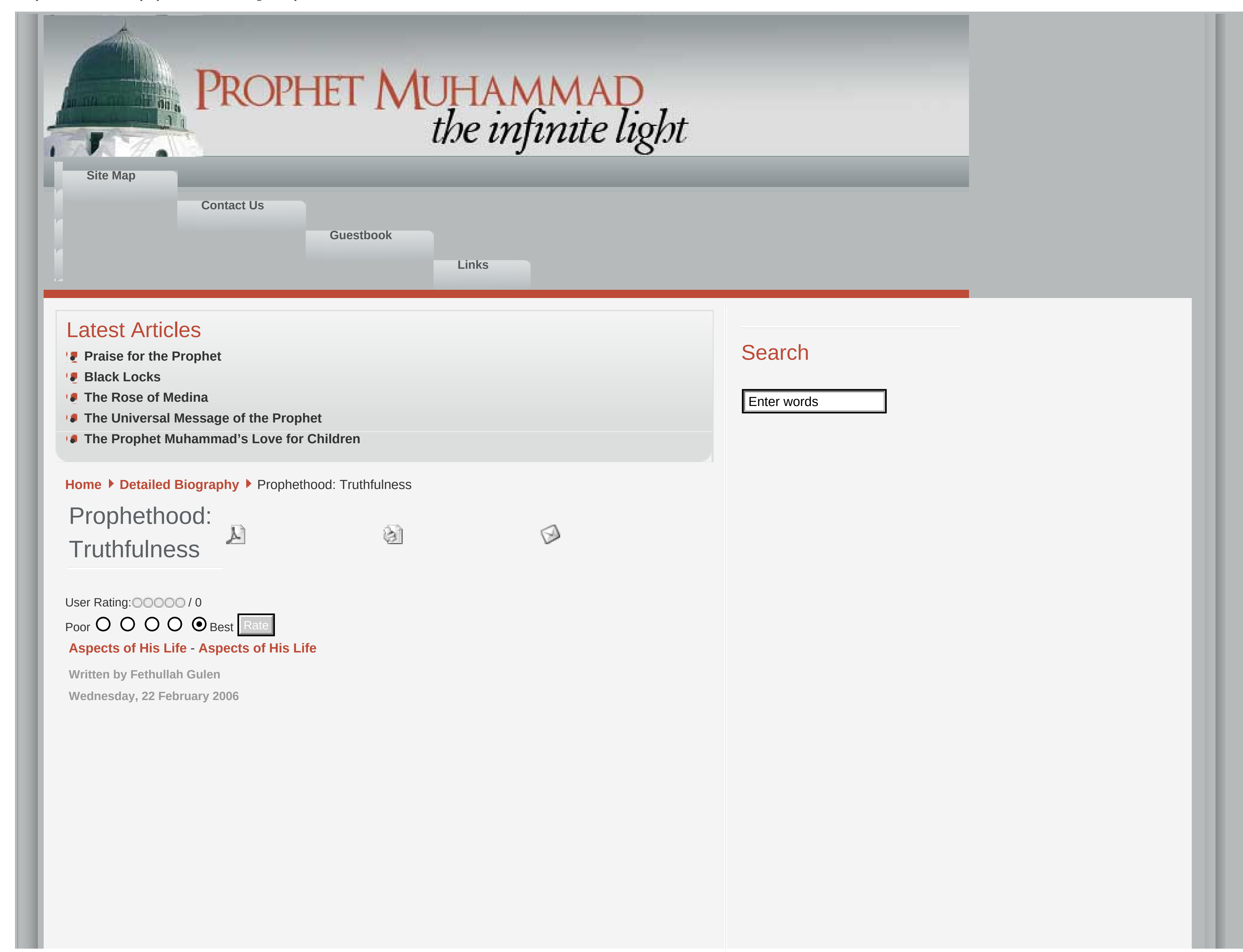
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"My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels."
-M.H. Hart, THE 100: A RANKING

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Prophethood: Truthfulness

Aspects of His Life - **Aspects of His Life**

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

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Truthfulness is the cornerstone of Prophethood. No lies or deceit, whether explicit or implicit, were ever heard from them. The Qur'an declares: Mention Abraham in the Book: Surely he was a most truthful Prophet (19:41); Mention Ishmael in the Book; surely, he was a man of his word, and he was a Messenger, a Prophet (19:54); and Mention Idris (Enoch) in the Book; surely he was a most truthful Prophet. We elevated him to an exalted place (19:56–57). We also read in the Qur'an that a fellow prisoner addressed Prophet Joseph: Joseph, O most truthful one (12:46).

The Prophets had to be endowed with truthfulness, for God wants everybody to be truthful and extols the truthful: O you who believe, fear God and be with the company of the truthful! (9:119), and: The believers are those who believed in God and His Messenger without ever feeling doubt thereafter, and strove with their souls and possessions in the way of God; those are the ones who are the truthful (49:15).

The Qur'an praises believers who, without faltering, carry out their promises: Among the believers are the valiants who have kept their promise which they gave to God: Some of them carried out their word [and were martyred] and the others are expecting (their turn); they have never thought of going back on their word (33:23).

This verse extols the heroes of Uhud, a decisive turning point in Islamic history. After the Qurayshi unbelievers were defeated at Badr, they had spent a whole year preparing for a deadly retaliatory blow at the Muslims. Meeting at the foot of Mount Uhud, a few miles from Madina, the Muslims at first were victorious and the Quraysh began to flee. At this crucial point, the archers whom God's Messenger had positioned at 'Aynayn pass left their positions, against the Prophet's command, and pursued the enemy. Khalid ibn Walid, commander of the enemy's cavalry, took this opportunity to surround the Muslims from behind. As a result, the Muslims experienced a reverse. Such leading figures as Hamza, Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr, 'Abd Allah ibn Jahsh, and Anas ibn Nadr were martyred. Even the Prophet was wounded.

Let us note here that during the battle, God's Messenger, the Prophet of forgiveness and mercy who was sent as a mercy for creation, raised his hands toward God and, while bleeding profusely, asked for the enemy to be forgiven: "O God, forgive my people, for they do not know." [1]

Anas ibn Nadr was the uncle of Anas ibn Malik, the servant of God's Messenger. Although he had sworn allegiance with God's Messenger in 'Aqabah before he emigrated to Madina, for some reason he did not fight at Badr. He so regretted this that he told God's Messenger: "O Messenger of God, if God allows us to confront them once more, they will see what sufferings I will inflict on them!" He fought fearlessly at Uhud, especially when the Muslims suffered a reverse. Just before being martyred, he told Mu'adh ibn Jabal with a smile: "By God, I sense the scent of Paradise behind Uhud."

The Qur'an exalts in the above verse (33:23) those martyrs who fulfilled their promise to God through His Messenger, as well as others expecting martyrdom, to show that they were true to their words. They are not the only ones extolled here; rather, all who fulfill their words and keep their promises are mentioned here.

God's Messenger was known as a truthful person even before Islam. The Makkans, even the unbelievers, called him al-Amin, the Trustworthy One, the Truthful. Even his enemies did not accuse him of lying after he proclaimed his Prophethood. After the Treaty of Hudaybiya (6 AH), God's Messenger sent letters to the rulers of neighboring countries. The Emperor of Byzantium received it in Syria at a time when a Makkan

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trade caravan headed by Abu Sufyan was in the area of Damascus. The Emperor summoned him, and the following conversation took place:

— Do the elite or the weak mostly follow him?
— The elite.
— Has anyone apostatized after converting?
— Not yet.
— Do his followers increase or decrease?
— They increase daily.
— Have you ever heard him tell a lie?
— No, never.

Struck by Abu Sufyan's answers, at that time the bitterest enemy of Islam, the Emperor acknowledged Muhammad's position: "It is inconceivable for one who has never told a lie during his whole life to invent lies against God." [2] The Emperor was right. Why would a believer who had never told a lie, even in jest, suddenly begin to lie, especially against God, when he is 40 years old and getting closer to the grave?

The Makkans agreed unanimously that God's Messenger was a truthful person. Once before his conversion, Yasir asked his son 'Ammar where he was going. 'Ammar said that he was going to Muhammad. Being fully satisfied of his son's safety while with Muhammd, he replied: "Muhammad is a trustworthy person. The Makkans recognize him so. If he claims Prophethood he must be telling the truth, for no one has ever heard him tell a lie."

God's Messenger always encouraged truthfulness, as can be seen in his words as recorded in the following Traditions:

• Promise me six things and I will promise you Paradise: Speak the truth, keep your promises, fulfill your trusts, remain (sexually) chaste, don't look at what is unlawful, and avoid what is forbidden. [3]

• Abandon what arouses your suspicions and follow what is certain. Truthfulness gives satisfaction; lying causes suspicion. [4]

• Seek truthfulness even if it might bring you to ruin. [5]

• Always be truthful, for truthfulness leads to righteousness and righteousness leads to Paradise. If you are always truthful and seek truthfulness, God records you as such. Never lie, for lying leads to shamefulness and shamefulness leads to Hell. If you insist on lying and seek deceit, God records you as such. [6]

Due to his truthfulness, God's Messenger rose to such a high rank that his nearness to God is expressed metaphorically in the Qur'an as follows: Then he approached and came nearer, till he was [distant] two bowlengths, or even nearer (53:8-9).

Truthfulness always brings salvation, even if it causes one's death. We die through truthfulness only once, whereas each lie is a different kind of death. One of the most striking examples of this is the case of Ka'b ibn Malik, a famous Ansari poet who swore allegiance to God's Messenger at 'Aqabah. Although he took part in almost all the battles, he missed the campaign of Tabuk without a justifiable excuse.

The Tabuk campaign was very difficult. It took place in mid summer and, what is more, against the Roman

Quote

“Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas, of a cult without images; the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?”
-Lamartine

Empire. Although God's Messenger always kept the destination of such campaigns secret, this time he disclosed it and wanted every believer to participate. Ka'b completed his preparations but, at the last minute, uncharacteristic negligence kept him from joining the army.

When God's Messenger returned from the campaign, he asked those who had not fought why they had stayed at home. The Hypocrites lied and made excuses, but Ka'b, being unable to lie, told the truth. God's Messenger told him to leave. Thereafter, Ka'b and two other believers who had done the same thing were boycotted. On the order of God's Messenger, no Muslim met with them or spoke to them. They repented publicly, begging God for forgiveness, for 50 days. After this, it was revealed that:

As for those three, the acceptance of their repentance was delayed until, for them, the Earth, vast as it is, was straitened and their own souls were straitened to them, and they perceived that there is no fleeing from God and no refuge but with Him. Then He accepted their repentance so that they could recover their former state. Verily, God is the One who accepts repentance, Most Merciful. (9:118)

After this revelation, Ka'b ibn Malik told God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings: "I promise to speak the truth as long as I live." [7]

Truthfulness is the pivot of Prophethood. It could not be otherwise, for if a Prophet were to lie, everything connected with the Divine religion would be upset. All it takes is one lie to call a mission into question. Thus God declares: If he [Muhammad] had invented false sayings concerning Us, We would surely have grasped him firmly, and then cut off the artery of his heart, and none of you could have withheld Us from doing this (69:44–47).

The Prophet never lied or broke his promise, either prior to or during his Prophethood. A Companion remembered: "Before his Prophethood, we made an appointment to meet somewhere. It was, however, 3 days after the appointed time when I remembered it. When I hastened to the appointed place, I found the future Prophet waiting for me. He was neither angry nor offended. His only reaction was to say: 'O young man, you have given me some trouble. I have been waiting here for you for 3 days.'" [8]

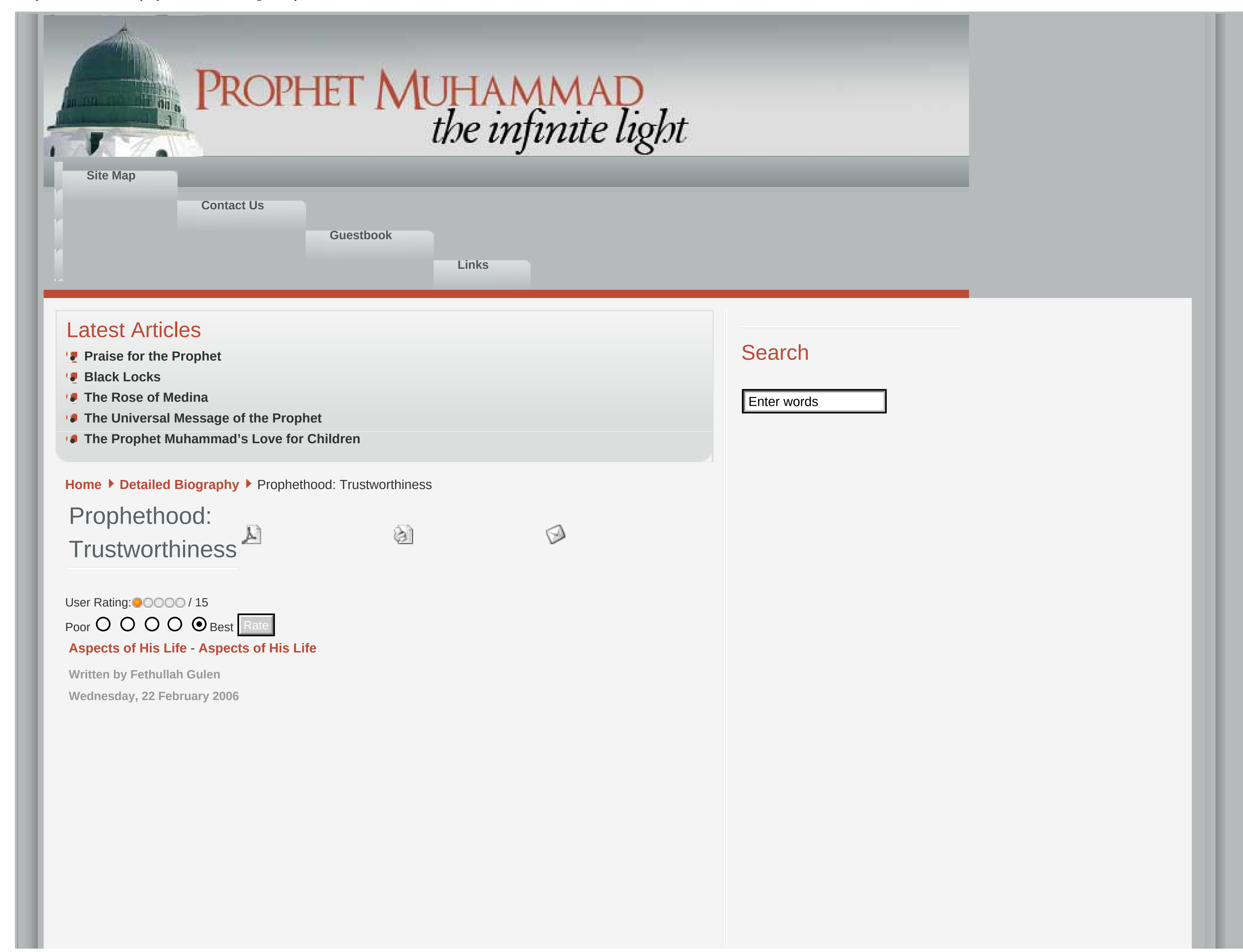
[1] Muslim, Jihad, 101; Bukhari, Anbiya', 54.
[2] Bukhari, Bad'u al-Wahy, 6.
[3] Ibn Hanbal, 5:323.
[4] Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 60; Ibn Hanbal, 1:200.
[5] Hindi, Kanz al-'Ummal, 3:344.
[6] Bukhari, Adab, 69; Muslim, Birr, 105; Abu Dawud, Adab, 80.
[7] Bukhari, Maghazi, 79; Muslim, Tawba, 53.
[8] Abu Dawud, Adab, 82.

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Aspects of His Life - **Aspects of His Life**

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

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The second attribute of Prophethood is amana, an Arabic word meaning trustworthiness and derived from the same root as mu'min (believer). Being a believer implies being a trustworthy person. All Prophets were the best believers and therefore perfect exemplars of trustworthiness. To stress this principle, God summarizes the stories of five Prophets using the same words: The people of Noah denied the Messengers. When their brother Noah asked them: "Will you not fear God and avoid evil? I am a trustworthy Messenger to you" (26:105–7). Replace the name Noah with those of Hud, Lut, Shu'ayb, and Salih, and you have a summarized version of these five Prophets' trustworthiness.

Mu'min is also a Divine Name, for God is the ultimate Mu'min, the source of security and reliability. We put our trust in, confide in, and rely upon Him. He distinguished the Prophets by their trustworthiness, and our connection to Him through the Prophets is based entirely on their trustworthiness and reliability.

Trustworthiness is also an essential quality of Archangel Gabriel. The Qur'an describes Gabriel as one obeyed and trustworthy (81:21). We received the Qur'an through two trustworthy Messengers: Gabriel and Prophet Muhammad. The former conveyed it; the latter related it to us.

The trustworthiness of God's Messenger. Prophet Muhammad was completely trustworthy toward all of God's creatures. He was loyal and never cheated anyone.

God chose the Messenger for his trustworthiness so that he would devote himself totally to delivering the Message truthfully. He was so concerned about his duty that he would repeat the verses while Gabriel was reciting them to him. God finally revealed: Move not your tongue concerning (the Qur'an) to make haste therewith. It is for Us to collect it, to establish it in your heart and enable you to recite it. So, when We have recited it to you, follow its recital. Then it is also for Us to make it clear to you (75:16–19).

As the Qur'an was given to him as a trust, he conveyed it to people in the best way possible. He dedicated his life to this sacred cause, constantly aware of his responsibility. In the last year of his life, when he was delivering the Farewell Pilgrimage's sermon at Mount 'Arafat, he reiterated the Commandments of God once more. At the end of each sentence, he told the people: "In the near future, they will ask you about me." He then would ask them if he had conveyed the Message to them, to which they responded, each time, with great enthusiasm: "Yes, you have conveyed it!" He then would call upon God to witness their words. [1]

Specific events demonstrating the Messenger's trustworthiness. God's Messenger never thought of concealing even a word of the Qur'an. In fact, we read in the Qur'an several Divine mild admonitions for a few actions of his. If he wrote it, as some mistakenly claim, why would he have included such verses?

The Prophet was raised in a primitive society characterized by customs that contradicted reason as well as sociological and scientific facts. For example, as adopted children enjoyed the same legal status as natural children, a man could not legally marry his adopted son's widow or ex-wife. This practice was abolished, for adoption does not create a relationship comparable to that with one's biological parents. God solved this problem, as always, through the Messenger's life in order to separate a legal fiction from a natural reality, and to establish a new law and custom.

Zayd, an emancipated black slave and servant of God's Messenger, was also his adopted son. At the

Quote

“If it was not for his Light, the universe and man, and all things, would be nothing. Yes, certainly such a person is necessary in such a wondrous universe; otherwise the universe and firmaments should not be in existence.”
-Bediuzzaman Said Nursi

Prophet's request, Zayd married Zaynab bint Jahsh. Nevertheless, it soon became clear that the marriage would not last long. Admitting that he was spiritually and intellectually inferior to his wife, Zayd thought it would be better for him to divorce her. In the end, the Qur'an commanded Muhammad to marry her: We gave her in marriage to you (33:37).

Of course, doing so would violate a strong social taboo. As such, and because the Hypocrites would use this to defame him, he delayed announcing the Divine decree. God admonished him as follows: Then you said to him on whom God bestowed grace and unto whom you had shown favor: "Keep your wife to yourself and fear God." But you hid in your heart that which God was about to make manifest because you feared the people [would slander you], whereas God had a better right that you should fear him (33:37). 'A'isha later commented: "If God's Messenger could have concealed any Revelation, he would have concealed that verse." [2]

If Muhammad had not been trustworthy, he would have done just that. However, such an act is contrary to his character and mission, and would mean that he had not delivered the Message. Furthermore, God prohibits him from doing this: O Messenger, deliver what has been sent down to you from your Lord; for if you do not, you will not have fulfilled your task of His Messengership. God will protect you from men. God does not guide the unbelievers (5:67). So, God's Messenger passed on whatever was revealed to Him.

His relations with others. God's Messenger was trustworthy and encouraged others to follow his example. Once during the last ten days of Ramadan, his wife Safiyya visited him while he was keeping vigil in the mosque. As he was escorting her home, two Companions happened to pass by. The Messenger stopped them and, unveiling his wife's face, said: "This is my wife Safiyya." They said: "God forbid any evil thought about you, O Messenger of God." The Messenger was warning them against having evil thoughts about him, for that could cause them to lose their faith and enter Hell. He gave them and us a lesson, saying: "Satan continuously circulates within people's blood vessels." [3]

God's Messenger was an embodiment of trustworthiness. His own people, even before his Prophethood, called him al-Amin (the Trustworthy One). After his declaration, his enemies continued to entrust him with their precious goods.

He warned his people against lying, breaking their word, and breaching their trust. All of these were condemned as "signs of hypocrisy." [4] He was so meticulous in this matter that when he saw a woman call her child, saying: "Come on, I'll give you something," he asked her if she was telling the truth. She replied that she would give him a date, to which God's Messenger responded: "If you don't give him something, you are a liar."

His concern in this matter extended even to animals. Once, annoyed at seeing a Companion trying to deceive his horse, he said: "Stop deceiving animals. Instead, be trustworthy with them." [5] Another time, while returning from a military campaign, a few Companions took some baby birds from a nest to pet them. The mother bird returned after a short while and, finding her babies gone, began to fly around in distress. When God's Messenger was informed, he was so upset that he ordered the babies returned immediately. Such an order was meant to show that representatives of trustworthiness should harm no living creatures. [6]

Each Companion was an embodiment of trustworthiness. By virtue of this and other laudable virtues, cities and states submitted to Islam. During 'Umar's caliphate, Abu 'Ubayda, the embodiment of justice, commanded the Muslim armies in Syria. When the Byzantine Emperor set out to recapture Hims, Abu 'Ubayda decided to evacuate the city, for his forces were vastly outnumbered. He had the non-Muslim

population assembled and announced: "We collected the protection tax from you because we had to defend you. Since we can't defend you against the coming Byzantine assault, we are returning the tax we collected." This was done. Pleased with the Muslim administration, Christian priests and Jewish rabbis flocked to the churches and synagogues to pray that God would cause the Muslim army to be successful. [7]

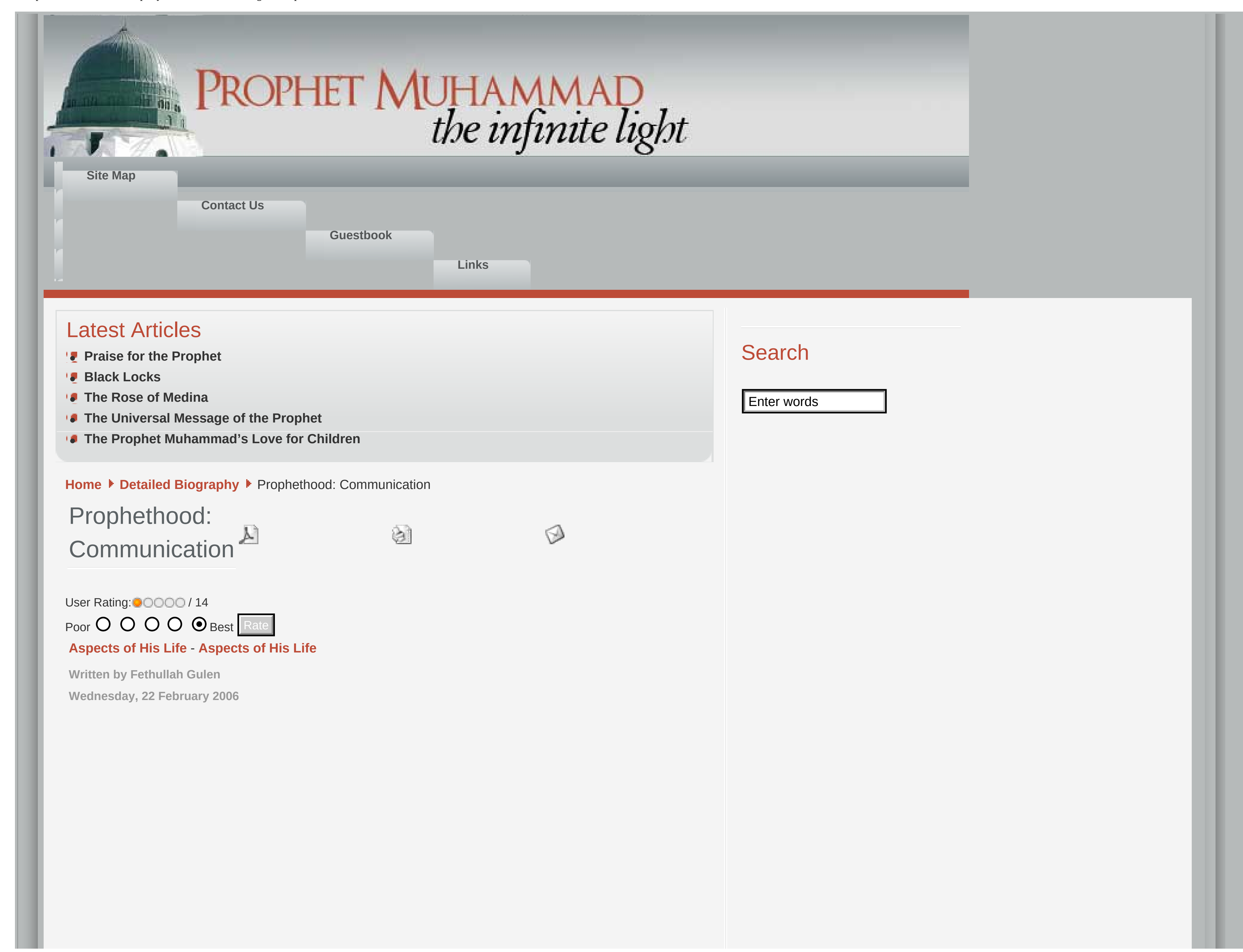
Such was the attitude of Muslim conquerors and administrators in the lands they ruled. Muslims stayed in Spain for eight centuries. If there were enough Christians left to acquire enough power to expel the Muslims later on, it was because of the Muslim administration's religious tolerance. Muslim rulers did not interfere with a conquered people's religion, language, or culture. If they had done so, there would have been no Christians left to recapture Spain, no Jews left to conquer Palestine, and no Christians left in the Balkans to engage in genocide. Nor would Christians have been able to destroy peoples, cultures, and languages on an almost-global scale.

Islam emphasizes trustworthiness and security to such an extent that suspicion and gossip are forbidden:

O you who believe! Avoid much suspicion, for suspicion in some cases is a grave sin. Do not spy on or gossip about one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would abhor it. Fear God, for verily God is the Acceptor of repentance, the Most Merciful. (49:12)

God's Messenger was so sensitive on this point that once when 'A'isha commented: "How long her neck is," he said: "You have gossiped about her and thereby eaten of her flesh!" [8]

[1] Abu Dawud, Manasik, 56; Ibn Maja, Manasik, 84; Ibn Kathir, Al-Bidaya, 5:173.
[2] Bukhari, Tawhid, 22; Muslim, Iman, 288.
[3] Bukhari, I'tiqaf, 8; Ibn Maja, Siyam, 65.
[4] Abu Dawud, Adab, 80; Ibn Hanbal, 3:447.
[5] Bukhari, Iman, 24; Muslim, Iman, 107.
[6] Abu Davud, Jihad, 112, Adab, 164; Ibn Hanbal, 1:404.
[7] Abu Dawud, Adab, 164; Ibn Hanbal, 1:404.
[8] Ibn Kathir, Tafsir, 7:359; Al-Targhib wa al–Tarhib, 4:285.


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Written by Fethullah Gulen
Wednesday, 22 February 2006

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The third attribute of Prophethood is communication of Islamic truths, otherwise known as "enjoining good and forbidding evil." We say Islamic truths because every Prophet came with the same Divine Religion based on submission to God, and had as his sole mission the communication of this Message.

Just as God manifests His Mercifulness through the sun's warmth and light, He manifested His Mercy and Compassion for humanity through Prophets. He chose Muhammad, whom He sent as a mercy for all worlds, to establish eternally the Message of compassion and mercy. If he had not been sent to revive and revise the Messages of previous Prophets and then spread that knowledge throughout the world, we would be wandering in a terrifying desert of unbelief, misguidance, and ignorance.

Philosophers, sociologists, and psychologists always have sought answers to such vital questions as: "Who am I?" "Where do I come from?" "What is my final destination?" "What is the purpose of life?" "What does our dying mean?" and "Is death absolute non-existence or only a door to a new, eternal life?" All of us wrestle with such questions. But only through the enlightenment of the Prophets we can find true satisfaction and peace of mind. Through them, we understand that this earthly life is just a way station on our perpetual journeying from the world of spirits to the world of eternity, a field to be planted with seeds for harvesting in the eternal world. This world is reached through the intermediate realm of the grave. With this realization, we are relieved of our anxieties, and the world is transformed into a flowery garden of recreation and a gathering place of friends.

Prophets were sent to convey this Message and to illuminate the path to happiness in this world and the next. Now we will discuss three essential points regarding how a Prophet conveys the Divine Message.

A comprehensive invitation to God. The Prophets dealt with people and life in a holistic manner, appealing to each person's intellect, reason, spirit, and all outer and inner senses and feelings. They never ignored or neglected any human faculties.

The position of a Prophet in relation to Divine Revelation is similar to that of a corpse in the hands of a mortician: The individual can do nothing of his own volition. [1] God directs and guides a Prophet as necessary so that he can lead his people. Without this Divine direction, he would be unable to guide anyone. If he neglected their intellects, the end result would be a community of poor, docile mystics. If he neglected their hearts or spirits, a crude rationalism devoid of any spiritual dimension would be produced. As each individual is comprised of intellect, spirit, and body, each must be assigned its due part of the Message.

Human beings are active. Therefore, they should be led to those activities that form the real purpose of their lives, as determined by God and communicated by the Prophet. God did not create people only to have them to become passive recluses, activists without reason and spirit, or rationalists without spiritual reflection and activism. Only when the intellect, spirit, and body are harmonized, and people are motivated to activity in the illuminated way of the Divine Message, can they become complete and attain true humanity. All Prophets sought this goal, and those who seek to follow them should strive for it: Say (Muhammad): "This is my way: I call (people) to God with wisdom and insight, I and those who follow me" (12:108).

A Prophet is totally dedicated to his mission, and thus is an altruist who lives for the happiness and good of others. His happiness lies in seeing people devote themselves to God in the hope of salvation, not in

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expecting some great reward for his services. He knows that his reward is with God alone. This indispensable fact is emphasized in the Qur'an: O my people! I ask of you no wealth for it; my reward is from none but God (11:29).

The Prophets were charged with conveying the Divine Message. They did their best, patiently faced many misfortunes and even torment, fulfilled their responsibilities, and then left the result to God. They knew with full certainty that only God brings about the desired result. These three fundamentals set the principles for all those who wish to call others to Islam.

The method. Constant striving is an essential feature of delivering he Message, as well as an important element of the Prophetic method. A Prophet is, so to speak, obsessed with how to perform his duty. With that goal always uppermost, he considers all circumstances and does everything permitted. As he is not responsible for the results, he leaves them to God. He knows that he cannot cause anyone to accept the Message, for he is only sent to convey it as effectively as possible: You [O Muhammad] guide not whom you like but God guides whom He wills. And He knows best those who receive guidance" (28:56).

Many Prophets lived with no one accepting their Message. However, they did not lose heart, weaken, or resort to such improper means as violence, terror, or deception even when faced with relentless hardship and torture. When the Last Prophet was severely wounded at Uhud, some Companions asked him to invoke God's curse on the enemy. Instead, he prayed for them, saying: "O God, forgive my people, because they don't know." [2] He made this supplication while his face was bleeding profusely, since he had once said: "It is as if I were seeing a Prophet who, while his face was bleeding, prayed for his people: 'O God, forgive my people, because they don't know.'"

All Prophets reacted in the same way to the torments and false accusations they had to endure. For example:

The leaders of Noah's people said: "We see you in clear deviation." He said: "O my people, there is no deviation in me. I am a Messenger from the Lord of the Worlds. I convey unto you the messages of my Lord, and give sincere advice to you. And I know from God that which you don't know." (7:60–62)

The leaders of Hud's people, who were unbelievers, said: "We see you in foolishness; and think you are a liar." He replied: "O my people, there is no foolishness in me. I am a Messenger from the Lord of the Worlds. I convey unto you the messages of my Lord, and am a trustworthy adviser to you." (7:66–68)

Nothing changed during the history of Prophethood. The Prophets conveyed the Message of their Lord for the sole purpose of God's pleasure. A Messenger was sent to every people, as explicitly stated in the Qur'an: Whoever goes right, then he goes right only for his own soul's benefit. And whoever goes astray, then he goes astray only to his own loss. No laden soul can bear another's load. And We never punish until We have sent a Messenger (17:15), and: And We have sent among every people a Messenger (saying): "Worship God (alone), and shun all false deities." (16:36)

After he received the first Revelation, God's Messenger returned home in a state of great excitement. While wrapped in his cloak, God ordered him: O you wrapped up in your cloak, arise and warn! Magnify your Lord. Cleanse your garments, and keep away from all pollution. Do not show favor, seeking worldly gain. Be patient for the sake of your Lord (74:1-7). He also was told: O you folded in garments! Keep vigil the night long, except a little; half of it, or a little less, or a little more, and recite the Qur'an in slow, measured rhythmic tones. We are about to address to you words of great gravity (73:1-5).

Quote

“His readiness to undergo persecutions for his beliefs, the high moral character of the men who believed in him and looked up to him as leader, and the greatness of his ultimate achievement - all argue his fundamental integrity. To suppose Muhammad an impostor raises more problems than it solves. Moreover, none of the great figures of history is so poorly appreciated in the West as Muhammad.”
-W. Montgomery Watt, MOHAMMAD AT MECCA, Oxford, 195

Every Prophet conveyed God's Message to his people without becoming wearied or daunted. Their people's harshness did not deter them. For example:

[Noah] said: "O my Lord! Day and night I have called my people. But my call has only added to their aversion. Every time I call on them to seek Your pardon, they thrust their fingers in their ears and cover themselves with their garments, persisting in sin and magnifying themselves in insolent pride. Further, I have called to them aloud. Further, I have spoken to them in public and in private, saying: 'Ask forgiveness from your Lord: for He is Oft-Forgiving.'" (71:5-10)

When a people rejects the Prophet sent to them and persists in unbelief and corruption, God's wrath usually falls upon them. The Qur'an contains accounts of several devastated peoples, and we see their ruins all over the world.

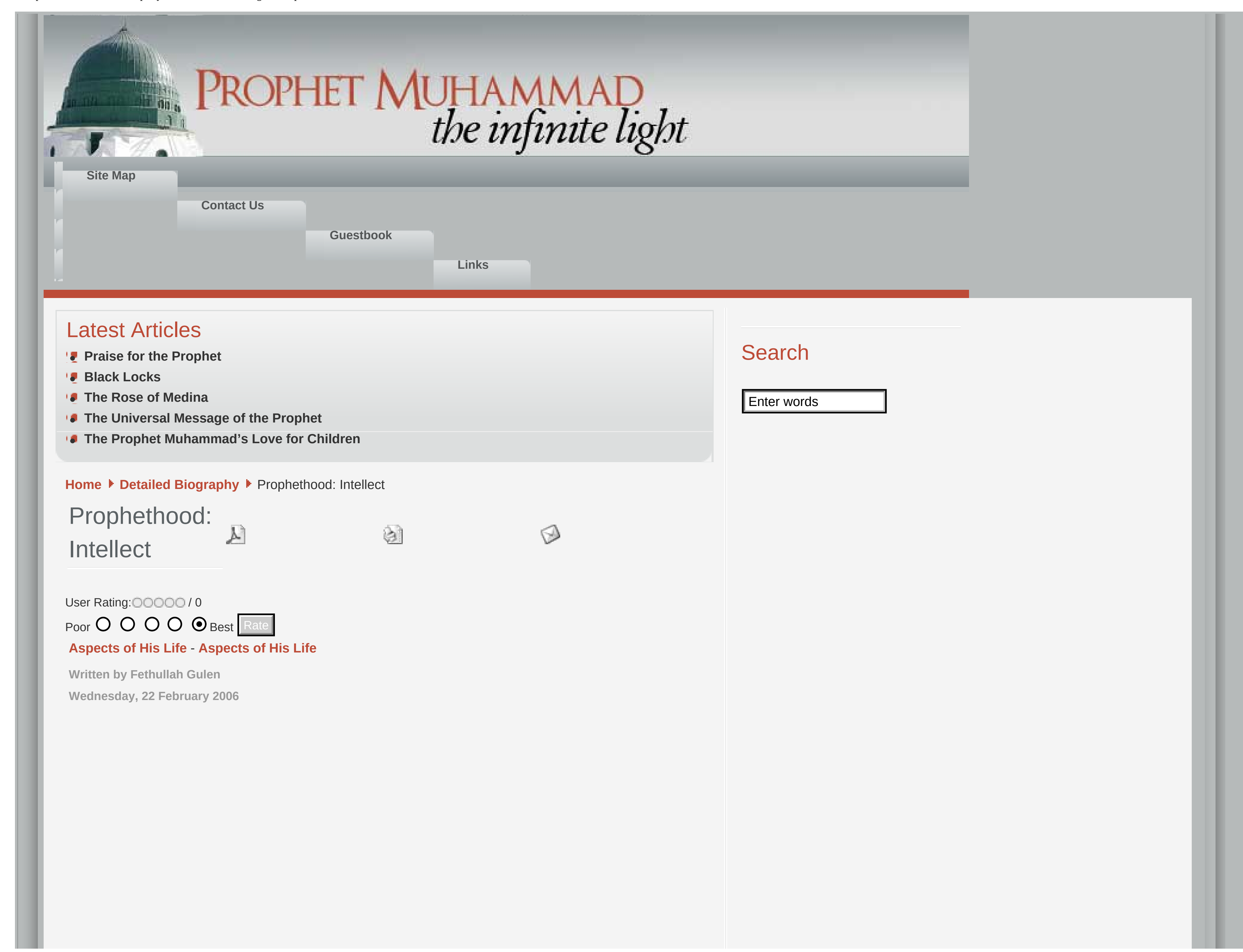
[1] This simile is coined with respect to the Prophet's submission to Revelation. He fulfils whatever he is commanded by Revelation.
[2] Qadi Iyad, Shifa' al-Sharif, 1:105; Bukhari, Anbiya', 54; Muslim, Jihad, 105.

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Written by Fethullah Gulen
Wednesday, 22 February 2006

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Intellect is another important attribute of Prophethood. In this context, it has a specific meaning: a composite of reasoning power, sagacity, intelligence, sound judgment, and wisdom far surpassing the ability of ordinary people through a sublime power of understanding. It encompasses and coordinates all human abilities, whether of the heart and soul or of the mind.

Under the influence of temporary trends, some reduce Islam to a rationalistic system. They regard reason as the ultimate authority, and make no distinction between the judgment of sound reason and the excesses and shortcomings of rationalism. All the principles of Islam, a revealed religion originating in an All-Encompassing Knowledge, can be confirmed by reason. However, a comprehensive understanding of Islam requires a Prophetic intellect to grasp the entire meaning of the universe and humanity. Islam admits reason's ultimate authority; not of human reason, which is limited by one's capacity and usually conflicts with another's, but of a Prophet's universal reason, for Islam is the name of the Divine universal order.

God manifests His Names through veils. His absolute Unity requires that we attribute effects directly to His creative Power. But His Transcendence, Grandeur, and Majesty require "natural" causes to veil His acts so that people do not ascribe to Him that which seems disagreeable to them. He raised the Prophets to communicate His Revelation. As we cannot receive Revelation directly, the Prophets functioned as a prism receiving and then reflecting Divine Revelation. They modulated the Revelation according to their audience's intellectual ability and the prevailing circumstances. In other words, the Prophetic intellect allows a Prophet to understand everything about his people and thus to answer all their questions and solve their problems.

If we study the Prophet's achievements, we see that he was a statesman and commander of the highest order. As the embodiment or most comprehensive manifestation of the Divine Attribute of Speech, he is the most influential orator we have ever seen. His words, regardless of their apparent simplicity, affect everyone, regardless of their intellectual simplicity. As human knowledge increases, we see that these supposedly simple words are, in fact, like an ocean whose depth is only appreciated the more deeply one dives into it, or like a rose with petals one within the other, each one full of meanings.

His level of understanding was so sublime that Wahb ibn Munabbih, who was well-versed in the Torah and Gospels, said: "When compared to that of God's Messenger, humanity's total mental capacity and perception is like a single sand particle compared to all the sand in a vast desert."

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"Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, unveiled the transitory nature of this world and death, and showed the grave to be a waiting room opening onto the realm of eternal happiness. He led every heart seeking happiness, regardless of place or time, to the fountain of Khadr, and enabled them to drink the elixir of immortality."

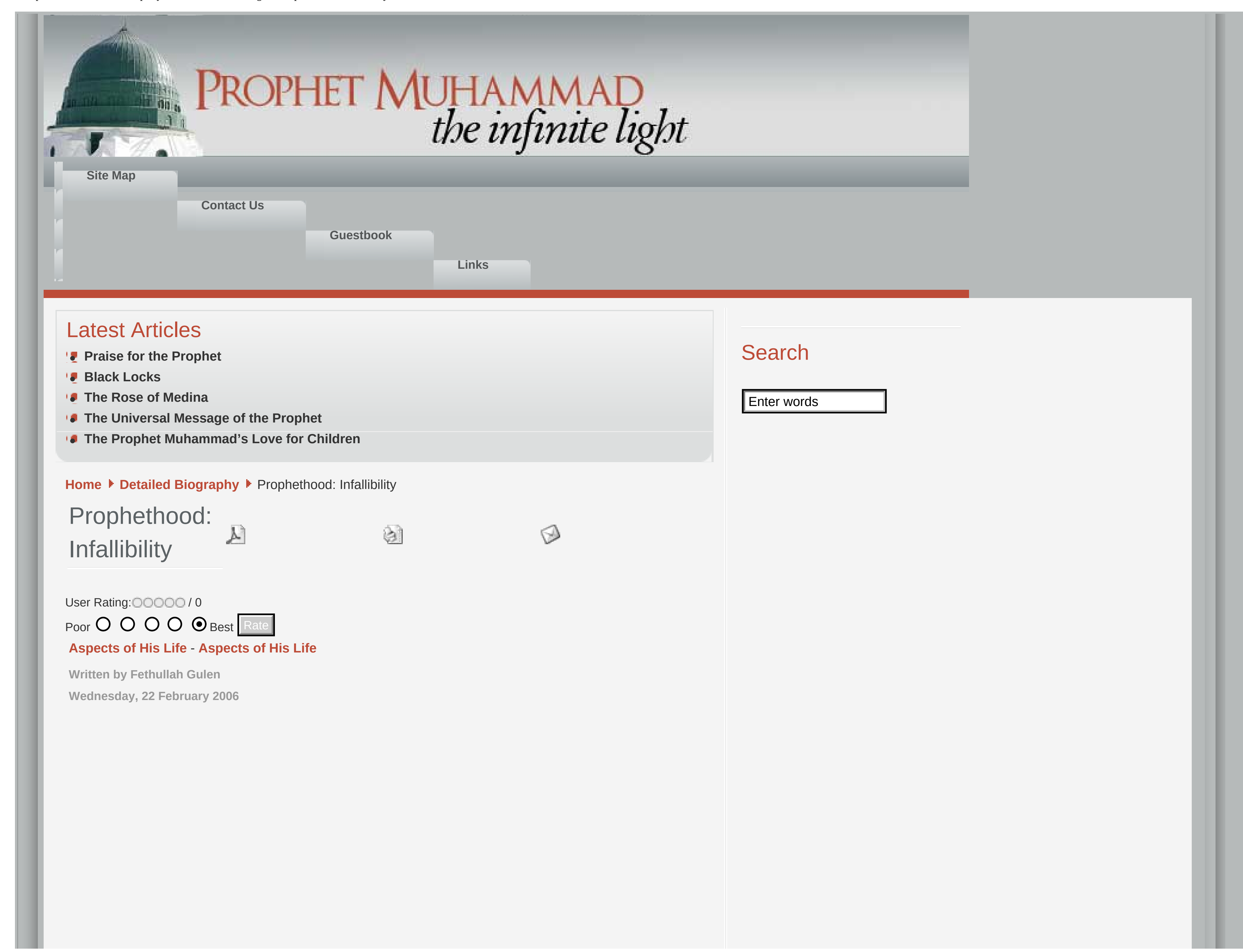
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Prophethood: Infallibility

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

Infallibility is a necessary attribute of the Prophets. The original Arabic word translated here as infallibility is 'isma, which means protecting, saving, or defending. It appears in the Qur'an in several derived forms. For example, when Prophet Noah asked his son to board the Ark, the latter replied: I will betake myself to some mountain; it will save me from the water. Noah replied: Today there is not a saving one [active participle] from the command of God (11:43).

The wife of a high Egyptian official, named Potiphar in the Bible (Genesis 39:1), uses the same word in: I did seek to seduce him, but he firmly saved himself guiltless (12:32). The Qur'an calls believers to hold fast to the rope of God—the Qur'an and Islam—using the same word in a different form: Hold fast all together to, and protect (against being divided), the rope of God (3:103). Again, we see the same word in the verse: God will defend (protect) you from people (5:67).

The infallibility of Prophets is an established fact based on reason and tradition. This quality is required for several reasons. First, Prophets came to convey the Message of God. If we liken this Message to pure water or light, as the Qur'an does (13:17, 24:35), the Archangel Gabriel (who brought it) and the Prophet (who conveyed it) also must be absolutely pure. If this were not the case, their impurity would pollute the Message. Every falling off is an impurity, a dark spot, in the heart. The hearts or souls of Gabriel and the Prophet are like polished mirrors that reflect the Divine Revelation to people, a cup from which people quench their thirst for the pure, Divine water.

Any black spot on the mirror would absorb a ray of that light; a single drop of mud would make the water unclear. As a result, the Prophets would not be able to deliver the complete Message. But they delivered the Message perfectly, as stated in the Qur'an: O Messenger! Convey what has been sent to you from your Lord. If you did not, you would not have fulfilled His mission. And God will defend you from people. Certainly, God guides not the unbelieving people (5:67) and: Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My favor upon you, and I have chosen and approved for you Islam as religion (5:3).

Second, the Prophets teach their people all the commands and principles of belief and conduct. So that the people learn their religion in its pristine purity and truth, and as perfectly as possible to secure their happiness and prosperity in both worlds, the Prophets must represent and then present the Revelation without fault or defect. This is their function as guides and good examples to be followed: You have in the Messenger of God a beautiful pattern, an excellent example, for anyone who aspires after God and the Last Day, and who engages much in the remembrance of God (33:21) and: There is for you an excellent example in Abraham and those with him … there was in them an excellent example for you—for those who aspire after God and the Last Day (60:4, 6).

A Prophet can do or say only that which has been sanctioned by God. If he could, he would have to repent even beyond his current lifetime. For example, Abraham will tell those who approach him for intercession on the Day of Judgment to go to Moses, saying he cannot intercede for them because he spoke allusively three times in his life. Although this is not a sin, his repentance will continue in the Hereafter.

Third, the Qur'an commands believers to obey the Prophet's orders and prohibitions, without exception, and emphasizes that it is not fitting for a believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by God and His Messenger, to have any option about their decision (33:36). It also warns believers that what falls to them when God and His Messenger have given a judgment is only to say: "We have heard and obeyed" (24:51). Absolute obedience to a Prophet means that all of his commands and prohibitions are correct and beyond reproach.

Prophethood is so great a favor that all Prophets bore extreme hardship while fulfilling the duty of

Quote

"....a mass of detail in the early sources show that he was an honest and upright man who had gained the respect and loyalty of others who were like-wise honest and upright men."
-ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA, Vol. 12

thanksgiving, and always worried about not worshipping God sufficiently. Prophet Muhammad often implored God as follows: "Glory be to You. We have not been able to know You as Your knowledge requires, O Known One. Glory be to You. We have not been able to worship You as Your worship requires, O Worshipped One."

The Qur'anic verses that are sometimes understood—mistakenly—to reprimand certain Prophets for some faults or to show that they seek God's forgiveness for some sin, should be considered in this light. Besides, God's forgiveness does not always mean that a sin has been committed. The Qur'anic words 'afw (pardon) and maghfira (forgiveness) also signify a special favor and kindness, as well as Divine dispensation, in respect to lightening or overlooking a religious duty, as in the following verses: If any is forced (to eat of them) by hunger, with no inclination towards transgression, God is indeed Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful (5:3) and: If... you find no water, then take for yourselves clean sand or earth, and rub therewith your faces and hands. For God is All-Pardoning and Oft-Forgiving (4:43).

Fifth, sins and pardoning have different types and degrees. These are: disobeying religious commandments, and forgiveness thereof; disobeying God's laws of creation and life, and forgiveness thereof; and disobeying the rules of good manners or courtesy (adab), and the forgiveness thereof. A fourth type, which is not a sin, involves not doing something as perfectly as possible, which is required by the love of and nearness to God. Some Prophets may have done this, but such acts cannot be considered sins according to our common definition of that word.

Tradition also proves the Prophets' infallibility. God says of Moses: I cast love over you from Me (and made you comely and loveable) in order that you might be brought up under My eye (20:39). Thus, as Moses was brought up by God Himself and prepared for the mission of Messengership, how could he possibly commit a sin?

The same is true of all other Prophets. For example, God's Messenger says of Jesus: "Satan could not touch Jesus and his mother at his birth." Jesus was protected from birth until his elevation to the Presence of God:

(Mary) pointed to the infant (Jesus). They asked: "How can we talk to an infant in the cradle?" Jesus said: "I am a servant of God. He has given me the Scripture and made me a Prophet. He has made me blessed wheresoever I be, and enjoined on me prayer and charity as long as I live. He has made me kind to my mother, and not overbearing or a wretched rebel. So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I will be raised up to life again." (19:29-33)

Jesus, like all Prophets, was protected from sin from his birth. God's Messenger, while still a child and not yet a Prophet, intended to attend two wedding ceremonies, but on each occasion was overpowered by sleep. [1] Likewise, during his youth he helped his uncles repair the Ka'ba by carrying stones. Since the stones hurt his shoulders, his uncle 'Abbas advised him to wrap part of his lower garment around his shoulders for padding. But as soon as he did so, thereby leaving parts of his thighs exposed, he fell on his back and stared fixedly. An angel appeared and warned him that: "This is not befitting for you," [2] for in the future he would tell people to be well-mannered and observe Divinely ordained standards of conduct, including covering the thighs. In such ways was the future Prophet protected from the pagan rituals and practices of his people.

God's Messenger says that "all children of Adam make mistakes and err, and the best of those who make faults and err are the repentant." [3] This implies that we are fallible by nature, not that we are condemned to make such mistakes. Whether by God's Will and special protection or, as will be explained below, by His

showing the way to become free of error or sin, even the greatest saints who continue the Prophetic mission may be infallible to some degree.

God promises to protect believers who obey Him in utmost respect and deserve His protection, and to endow them with sound judgment so that they can distinguish between truth and falsehood, right and wrong: O you who believe! If you obey God in utmost respect, He will establish in you a Criterion (to judge between right and wrong), purify you of all your evils, and forgive you. God is of grace unbounded (8:29).

God made a covenant with the believers that if they obey Him and strive to exalt His Word, by proclaiming His religion, He will help them and establish them firmly in the religion, protecting them against all kinds of deviation (47:7). This protection from enemies and committing sins depends upon their support of Islam and the struggle to spread it so that only God is worshipped, and that no partners are associated with Him in belief or worship, or in the creation and rule of the universe. If believers keep their promise, God will keep His (2:40); if they break it, God will cause them to fail (17:8).

God protects His servants against sin in different ways. For example, he may place obstacles in their way, establish a "warner" in their hearts, or even cause them to suffer some injury so that they physically cannot sin. Or, He may put a verse in someone's mouth, as happened with a young man during 'Umar's caliphate.

The young man was so strict and attentive in his worship that he prayed every prayer in the mosque. A woman who lived on his way to the mosque had become enamored with him and so sought to seduce him. Although he resisted her gestures, the moment came when he took a few steps in her direction. Just at this moment, he felt he was reciting: Those who fear God, when a thought of evil from Satan assaults them, bring God to remembrance, and lo! they see (aright) (7:201). Overwhelmed with shame before God, and with love of God for preventing him from committing this sin, he fell down dead. When 'Umar was informed of this a few days later, he went to his grave and shouted: "O young man. For those who fear the time when they will stand before the Lord, there will be two gardens!" (55:46). A voice from the grave, whether that of the young man or an angel on his behalf, replied: "O Commander of the Believers, God has granted me the double of what you say."

This is how God protects His sincere servants. He says in a hadith qudsi: My servants cannot draw near to me through something else more lovable to Me than performing the obligations I have enjoined upon them. Apart from those obligations, they continue to draw near to Me through supererogatory acts of worship, until I love them. When I love them, I will be their ears with which they hear, their eyes with which they see, their hands with which they grasp, and their feet on which they walk. If they ask Me for something, I will give it to them immediately. If they seek refuge in Me from something, I will protect them from it.

God guides His true servants to good and protects them from evil. The servants will and do what is good, and refrain from wickedness. They ask God for what is good, and whatever they ask is provided. They seek refuge in God from what is bad, and God protects them according to their request.

All Prophets were infallible, sinless, and lived completely virtuous lives. Although God sent numerous Prophets, the Qur'an specifically mentions only 28 of them. I think it would be proper here to count them in the words of Ibrahim Haqqi, an eighteenth-century Turkish saint and religious scholar, who also was an expert in anatomy and astronomy:

Some have regarded it a religious injunction to learn the names of the Prophets.

God informed us of 28 of them in the Qur'an:

Adam, Enoch, Noah, Hud, and Salih;
Abraham, Isaac, and Ishmael, who was a sacrifice for God;
Jacob, Joseph, Shu'ayb, Lot, and John the Bapitst;
Zachariah and Aaron, the brother of Moses, who spoke to God;
David, Solomon, Elijah, and Job;
Elisha, a relative of Jesus, who was a spirit from God;
Dhul-Kifl and Jonah, who was certainly a Prophet.

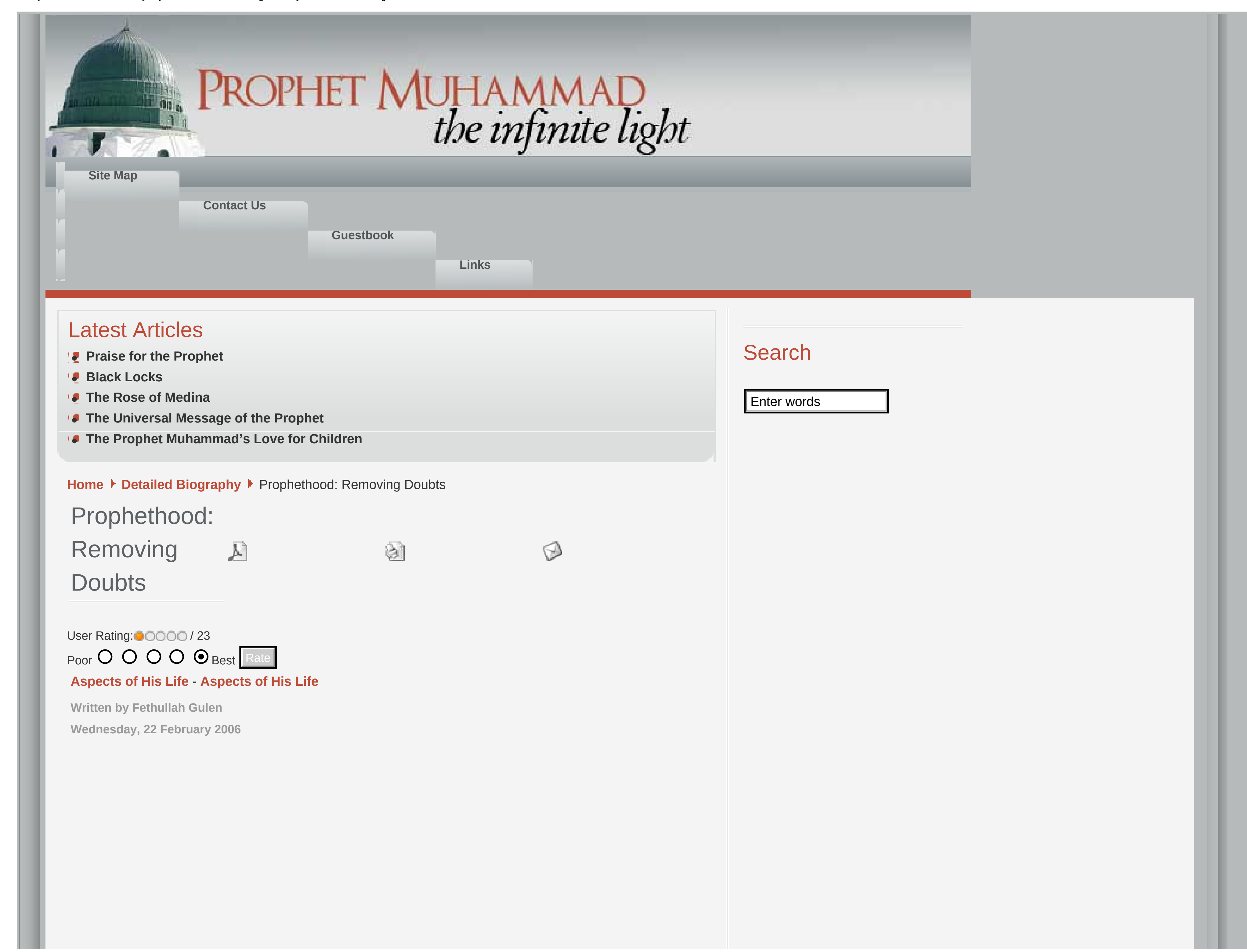
The Seal of Prophets is the Beloved of God—Muhammad, Messenger of God. Scholars disagree on the Prophethood of Ezra, Luqman, and Dhul-Qarnayn. Some regard them as Prophets, while others consider them saints of God.

[1] Ibn Kathir, Al-Bidaya, 2:350–1.
[2] Bukhari, "Hajj," 42; Ibn Kathir, "Al-Bidaya," 2:350.
[3] Tirmidhi, "Qiyama," 49; Ibn Maja, "Zuhd," 30.

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Prophethood: Removing Doubts

Aspects of His Life - **Aspects of His Life**

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

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Some Qur'anic verses appear to reprimand certain Prophets or entertain the possibility that a Prophet can sin, according to the usual definition of that word. Before clarifying specific examples, it may be appropriate to acquit the Prophets of such accusations.

Genesis 19:30-38 states that Prophet Lot's two daughters caused him to get drunk so that he would impregnate them. Such a charge against a Prophet is beyond belief. Lot's people (Sodom and Gomorra) were destroyed by God for their sexual immorality. Even the Bible says that Lot and his daughters were the only ones spared, because of their belief, good conduct, and decency. This supposed "sin" of Prophet Lot is worse than the sin of his people, which caused God to destroy them!

In Genesis 38:15-18, Judah, a son of Jacob, is supposed to have engaged in sexual relations with his daughter-in-law. This woman, in turn, gave birth to twin boys. Some of the Israelite Prophets were descended from them. Genesis 49:4 also claims that Jacob's other son, Reuben, slept with his father's wife (Reuben's step-mother).

Neither the sons of Jacob, whom the Qur'an mentions as "grandchildren" whose ways should be followed, nor his wives could have engaged such a behavior. Our Prophet explicitly declared that there is not a single case of fornication in his lineage back to Adam, [1] and that all Prophets are brothers descended from the same father. [2] Our Prophet is a descendant of Abraham, as were Judah and the other Israelite Prophets. Thus, how could any of them be the result of an improper sexual alliance?

II Samuel 11 records that Prophet David fell in love with the wife of a commander and committed adultery with her. According to the Bible, he then had her husband sent to the front line and, after he was killed, married her.

David is a Prophet who was given a Divine Scripture (the Psalms) and who is praised in the Qur'an for his sincere and profound devotion to God:

Be patient with them, and remember Our servant David, the man of strength and abilities, who always turned to God in sincere devotion and submission. We made the mountains declare, in unison with him, Our praises, at eventide and at the break of day, and the birds gathered (in assemblies): all with him did turn to Him (in profound devotion). We strengthened his kingdom and gave him wisdom and sound judgment (in speech and decision). (38:17-20)

Though a king, he lived a simple life by his own labor. He had such a great awareness of God that he cried a great deal and fasted every other day. Our Prophet recommended this type of fast to some Companions who asked about the most rewarding type of supererogatory fasting. [3] Could such a noble Prophet ever commit adultery with a married woman, plot her husband's death, and then marry her?

In I Kings 11:1–8, despite God's command: "You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods," Prophet Solomon is accused of marrying many foreign women belonging to pagan nations and following their gods and goddesses (idols). Would a Prophet be able to commit such a grievous sin as following the idols and deities of other tribes?

If the Qur'an had not been revealed, we would not be sure whether the previous Prophets really were

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“He must be called the Saviour of Humanity. I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it much needed peace and happiness.”
-The Genuine Islam, Singapore, Vol.

sincere, devout, and thankful servants of God. The Qur'an frees Jesus from his followers' mistaken deification of him and from his own people's denial of his Prophethood, and explains that God had no sons and daughters. It also clears the Israelite and non-Israelite Prophets of their supposed "sins" mentioned in the Bible. It presents Jesus as a spirit from God breathed into the Virgin Mary, Abraham as an intimate friend of God, Moses as one who spoke to God, and Solomon as a king and a Prophet who prayed to Him humbly:

O my Lord, order me that I may be grateful for your favors, which You have bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may work the righteousness that will please You. Admit me, by Your Grace, to the ranks of Your righteous servants. (27:19)

Solomon never worshipped idols or committed a sin. Despite being the greatest and most powerful king that ever lived, he remained a humble servant of God until his death.

Several other assertions are equally impossible to accept. For example: The Bible claims that although Prophet Isaac wanted to bless his older son Esau, he mistakenly blessed Jacob, for he could not see through his wife Rebaka's trick (Genesis 27). Also, the Bible claims that Prophet Jacob wrestled with God, who appeared to him in the form of a man (Genesis 32:24-30).

Individual examples. A small minority of Muslim scholars have asserted that the Prophets may have committed insignificant sins (zalla: error or lapse). To prove their assertion, they cite some examples from the lives of Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Joseph.

Before elaborating upon this, it should be noted that lapses and sins have totally different definitions. Sin, for example, means disobedience to God's Commands. When the Prophets were faced with a question that they could not answer, they tended to wait for Revelation. On rare occasions, however, they used their own reason to decide the matter, as they were the foremost mujtahids (jurists of the highest rank who can deduce laws from the principles established by the Qur'an and the Sunna). They might have erred in their judgments or decisions. However, such errors, which were immediately corrected by God, are not sins.

Moreover, the Prophets always sought God's good pleasure and tried to obtain whatever was best. If, for some reason, they could not obtain the best but had to settle for the better, a very rare event, this does not mean that they sinned. For example: Suppose you must decide whether to recite the Qur'an in 10 days while giving due attention to each verse, or recite it in 7 days to express your deep love of the Word of God. If you choose the first option without knowing that God's greater pleasure lies in the second, you cannot be considered guilty of a sin. So, a Prophet's preference of what is better instead of the best is not a sin. However, because of his position before Him, God might sometimes reproach him mildly.

Now, we will clarify some individual examples in the lives of certain Prophets.

Adam. Adam was in the Garden before his worldly life. While therein, God told him and his wife Eve not to eat of the fruit of a particular tree. They disobeyed Him in this matter, and so were expelled from the Garden and commanded to live on earth.

Although Qur'anic interpreters differ on what the prohibited fruit was, it was most probably the human inclination toward the opposite sex. Satan approached Adam and Eve, saying that it was a tree of eternity and of a kingdom that would never decay, the fruit of which had been prohibited to them (20:120). Most probably knowing that they were mortal, Adam and Eve must have desired eternity through offspring, as such a desire is inherent in people. This also can be deduced from:

1, No. 8, 1936

Then Satan whispered to them so that he might show to them that which was hidden from them of their shame. He said: "Your Lord forbade you this tree only lest you should become angels or become immortal." And he swore to them (saying): "Truly, I am a sincere adviser to you." Thus did he lead them by a deceit. When they tasted of the tree, their shame was shown to them and they began to cover (by placing) on themselves some leaves of the Garden... (7:20–22).

Even if we accept Adam's eating of the forbidden fruit as a lapse, it is difficult to regard it as deliberate or sustained disobedience or revolt against God, which might lead us to see the Prophets as fallible. First, Adam was not a Prophet while in the Garden. Second, this lapse was the result not of willful disobedience, but merely some sort of forgetfulness. Concerning this, the Qur'an says: We had made a covenant with Adam before, but he forgot, and we found on his part no firm resolve (20:115).

Sins committed because of forgetfulness will not be accounted for in the Hereafter. The Prophet said: "My community is exempt from being questioned about forgetting, unintentional errors, and what they are compelled to do." The Qur'an teaches us this prayer: Our Lord, don't condemn us if we forget or fall into error (2:286).

Adam did not make this lapse deliberately. Although some have read into this verse Adam's lack of determination to fulfill his covenant with God, the context does not allow such an interpretation. Adam and Eve turned to God immediately after their lapse and, in sincere repentance, entreated Him: Our Lord, we have wronged our own selves. If you don't forgive us and don't bestow Your Mercy upon us, we certainly shall be among the lost (7:23).

Destiny had a part in Adam's lapse. God had destined him to be His vicegerent on Earth, even before his creation and settlement in the Garden. This is explicit in the Qur'an:

Behold, your Lord said to the angels: "I will make a vicegerent on Earth." They asked: "Will you make therein one who will make mischief and shed blood, while we celebrate Your praises and glorify You?" He said: "I know what you know not" (2:30)

God's Messenger also points to that truth in a hadith:

Adam and Moses met each other in Heaven. Moses said to Adam: "You are the father of humanity, but you caused us to come down to Earth from the Garden." Adam replied: "You are the one whom God addressed directly. Did you not see this sentence in the Torah: 'Adam had been destined to eat of that fruit 40 years before he ate of it?'"

After reporting this meeting, God's Messenger added three times: "Adam silenced Moses." [4]

Adam's life in the Garden and his trial were preliminaries he had to pass through before his earthly life. He passed these tests. Being chosen and rescued from the swamp of sin and deviation, he was made a Prophet and honored with being the father of thousands of Prophets, including Prophet Muhammad, and millions of saints: Then his Lord chose him; He relented toward him, and rightly guided him (20:122).

Noah. Prophet Noah called his people to the religion of God for 950 years. When they insisted on unbelief and persisted in their wrongdoing, God told him to build the Ark. After completing this task, Noah placed therein, according to God's command, a male and female of each animal, all his family members (except

for those whom God already had said He would punish), and the believers (11:40).

When the Ark was floating through the mountain-high waves, Noah saw that one of his sons had not boarded the Ark. He called to him, but his son rejected his call, saying: I will betake myself to some mountain and it will save me from the water (11:43). When Noah saw his son drowning, he called out to God: My Lord, my son is of my family! Your promise is true, and You are the Most Just of Judges (11:45). God replied: O Noah, he is not of your family, for his conduct is unrighteous. Do not ask of Me that of which you have no knowledge. I give you counsel, lest you should act like the ignorant (11:46).

Some scholars have regarded Noah's appeal as a sin. However, it is difficult to agree with them. Noah is mentioned in the Qur'an as one of the five greatest Prophets, and is described as resolute and steadfast. He thought his son was a believer. It is well known that the religion of God tells us to judge according to outward appearances. Thus, those who profess belief and appear to perform the religious duties of primary importance (e.g., prescribed prayers and alms-giving) are treated as believers. This is why Prophet Muhammad treated the Hypocrites as if they were Muslims. Apparently, Noah's son hid his unbelief until the Flood, for it was Noah himself who had prayed beforehand that God should forgive him, his parents, and all who entered his house in faith, and all believing men and believing women, and grant to the wrongdoers no increase but perdition (71:28).

God accepted his prayer and told him to board the Ark with his family, except those who had already deserved punishment because of their willful insistence on unbelief. Noah's wife was among those who drowned. Noah did not ask God to save her, for he either knew or was informed that she was an unbeliever. He must have thought his son was a believer. As such, he felt compelled to express, in a manner befitting a Prophet, his astonishment that God had let him drown. This is why God replied to him as He did (11:46).

[1] Ibn Kathir, Al-Bidaya, 2:313–4.
[2] Bukhari, "Anbiya'," 48; Muslim, "Fada'il," 144.
[3] Bukhari, "Tahajjud," 7, "Sawm," 59; Muslim, "Siyam," 182.
[4] Bukhari, "Tafsir," 3; Tirmidhi, "Qadar," 2; Ibn Hanbal, 2:287, 314.

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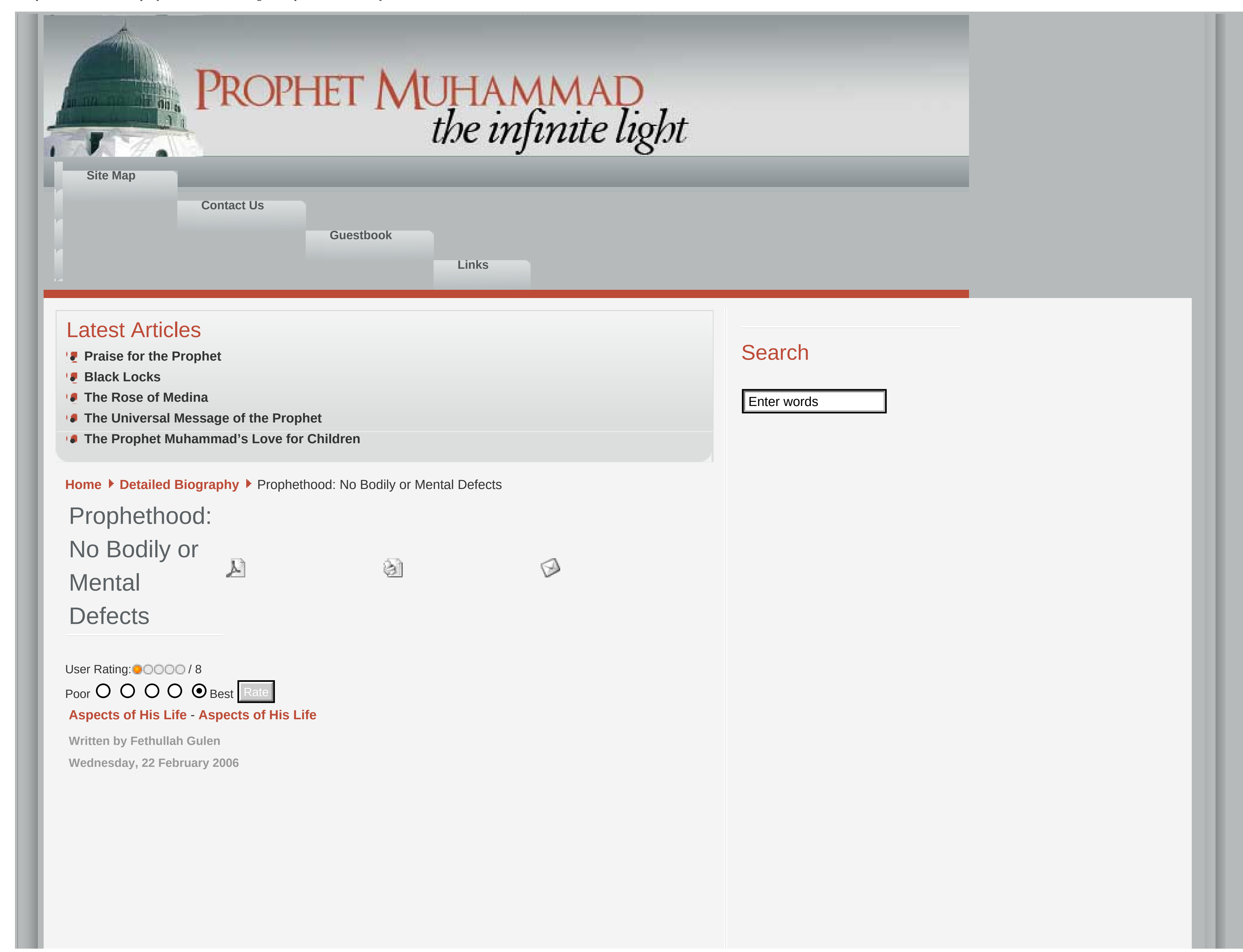
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Prophethood: No Bodily or Mental Defects

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Aspects of His Life - **Aspects of His Life**

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

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All Muslim theologians agree that Prophets have no bodily or mental defects. As they were extraordinarily attractive in personality and conduct, they were also graceful and charming in outward appearance. They were perfect in bodily structure, handsome, and well-built.

Anas says that God's Messenger was the most handsome of people. Jabir ibn Samura remarks: "Once during a full moon, we were sitting in the mosque. God's Messenger came in. I looked first at the shining moon, and then at his face. I swear by God that his face was brighter than the moon." [1]

Prophets must be free from all bodily defects, for their appearance should not repel others. In explaining the Divine wisdom of God's Messenger living for 63 years, Said Nursi writes:

Believers are religiously obliged to love and respect God's Messenger to the utmost degree, and follow his every command without feeling any dislike for any aspect of him. For this reason, God did not allow him to live to the troublesome and often humiliating period of old age, and sent him to the "highest abode" when he was 63 years old. This was the average life-span of the members of his community, thus making him the example in this respect also. [2]

Job's Afflictions

Despite this characteristic being common to all Prophets, false stories about Job and Moses, either borrowed from Israelite sources or misunderstandings of Qur'anic verses, have found their way into Qur'anic commentaries.

In a hadith, God's Messenger says: "The Prophets undergo the severest trials; the greatest misfortunes strike them. Then come other believers; the firmer their belief, the bigger their misfortune." Prophet Job is praised in the Qur'an as a steadfast, excellent servant of God, one ever-turning to his Lord (38:44). As can be deduced from the Qur'anic verses, and mentioned in the Bible, he was afflicted with a skin disease, which caused painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head (Job 2:7). Influenced by Israelite stories, some Qur'anic commentators have added that worms lived in his sores or abscesses, and that the resulting offensive odor caused people to leave him.

These additions are completely groundless. If people really left him, this might have been due to his later poverty. In the beginning, Job was a rich, thankful servant of God; later on, he lost his wealth and children. As a Prophet, he could not have had a repulsive or disgusting appearance, with, at least, his face exempt from sores. Nor could his body have emitted an offensive smell. Contrary to the Biblical account that he cursed the day of his birth (Job, 3:1) and God openly (Job, 7:20-21), and justified himself rather than God (Job, 32:2), Job bore his afflictions for years without any objection. He prayed: Affliction has visited me, and You are the Most Merciful of the Merciful (21:83). God answered his prayer and removed his affliction, and restored to him his household and the like thereof along with them (21:84).

Moses' Speech Impediment

The Qur'an states that Moses, on receiving the order to go to Pharaoh, supplicated: My Lord, open my breast (relieve my mind and enable me to bear everything), and ease for me my task. Loosen a knot upon my tongue so that they may understand my words (20:25–28). Some commentators, influenced by Israelite sources and misunderstanding Moses' supplication, have asserted that he had a speech impediment. According to them, a young Moses once pulled Pharaoh's beard. Angered, Pharaoh wanted to have him killed. But his wife, trying to save the child, asked Pharaoh to test him to see whether he was fit to be

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"Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, called upon us to protect religion, life, reason, property and the integrity of family and lineage, and to strive for this purpose. In a remarkably balanced way, he proclaimed that no other duty could equal this struggle."

judged or decide in his favor. Bringing a weighing scale, the put a piece of gold in one pan and some embers in the other. Moses put the embers in his mouth, which gave him a permanent stutter. So, according to these interpretations, Moses was asking God to remove his stutter.

An invented story cannot serve as the basis for interpreting a Qur'anic verse. If Moses had had such a speech impediment, he should have prayed for the knot—not a knot—to be loosened. What Moses was asking for was a greater ability to articulate God's Message in Pharaoh's presence, for he was not as eloquent as his brother Aaron (28:34; Exodus 4:10).

In conclusion, all Prophets were both physically and mentally perfect. Regardless of what others might claim, there is nothing in their lives to suggest even the slightest defect. However, some of them may have been superior to others in certain respects: And those Messengers, some We have preferred above others; some there are to whom God spoke [directly], and some He raised in rank (2:253). Prophet Muhammad is superior to all of them by virtue of being the last Prophet sent to both humanity and jinn. His Mission was not restricted to a certain people or a certain time; rather, it was directed toward all people and remains valid until the end of time.

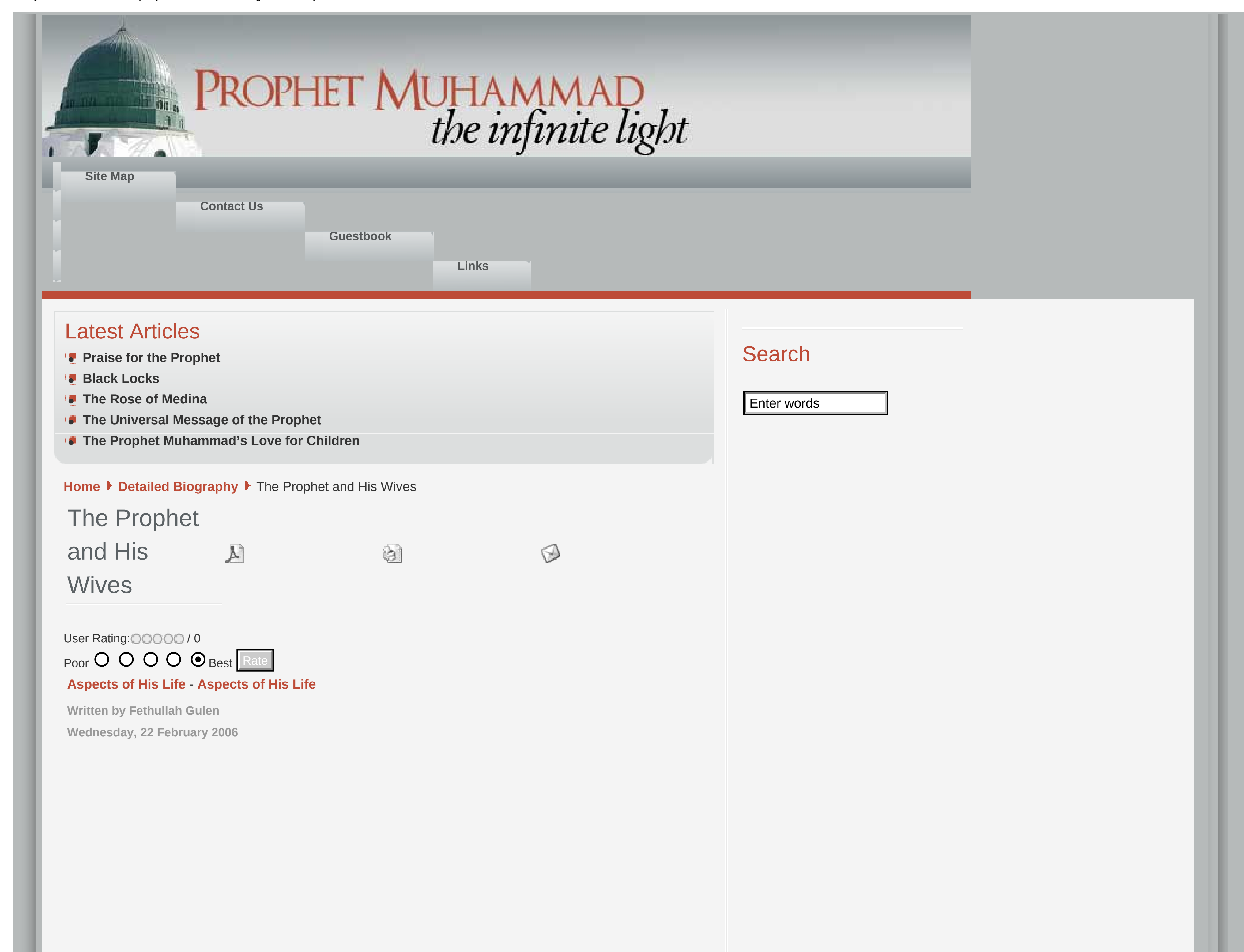
[1] Suyuti, Al-Khasa'is al-Kubra', 1:123; Hindi, Kanz al-'Ummal, 7:168.
[2] The Letters, 2:84–5.

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-Fethullah Gulen

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The Prophet and His Wives

Aspects of His Life - Aspects of His Life

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

Prophet Muhammad personifies the roles of perfect father and husband. He was so kind and tolerant with his wives that they could not envisage their lives without him, nor did they want to live away from him.

He married Sawda, his second wife, while in Makka. After a while, he wanted to divorce her for certain reasons. She was extremely upset at this news, and implored him: "O Messenger of God, I wish no worldly thing of you. I will sacrifice the time allocated to me, if you don't want to visit me. But please don't deprive me of being your wife. I want to go to the Hereafter as your wife. I care for nothing else." [1] The Messenger did not divorce her, nor did he stop visiting her.

Once he noticed that Hafsa was uncomfortable over their financial situation. "If she wishes, I may set her free," he said, or something to that effect. This suggestion so alarmed her that she requested mediators to persuade him not to do so. He kept his faithful friend's daughter as his trusted wife.

All of his wives viewed separation from the Messenger of God as a calamity, so firmly had he established himself in their hearts. They were completely at one with him. They shared in his blessed, mild, and natural life. If he had left them, they would have died of despair. If he had divorced one of them, she would have waited at his doorstep until the Last Day.

After his death, there was much yearning and a great deal of grief. Abu Bakr and 'Umar found the Messenger's wives weeping whenever they visited them. Their weeping seemed to continue for the rest of their lives. Muhammad left a lasting impression on everyone. At one point, he had nine wives and dealt equally with all of them and without any serious problems. He was a kind and gentle husband, and never behaved harshly or rudely. In short, he was the perfect husband.

A few days before his death, he said: "A servant has been allowed to choose this world or his Lord. He chose his Lord." [2] Abu Bakr, a man of great intelligence, began to cry, understanding that the Prophet was talking about himself. His illness worsened daily, and his severe headache caused him to writhe in pain. But even during this difficult period, he continued to treat his wives with kindness and gentleness. He asked for permission to stay in one room, as he had no strength to visit them one by one. His wives agreed, and the Messenger spent his last days in 'A'isha's room.

Each wife, because of his generosity and kindness, thought she was his most beloved. The idea that any man could show complete equality and fairness in his relationships with nine women seems impossible. For this reason, the Messenger of God asked God's pardon for any unintentional leanings. He would pray: "I may have unintentionally shown more love to one of them than the others, and this would be injustice. So, O Lord, I take refuge in Your grace for those things beyond my power." [3]

What gentleness and sensitivity! I wonder if anyone else could show such kindness to his children or spouses. When people manage to cover up their lower inborn tendencies, it is as if they have done something very clever and shown tremendous willpower. But they sometimes expose these very defects unconsciously while bragging of their cleverness. The Messenger, despite showing no fault, sought only God's forgiveness.

His gentleness penetrated his wives' souls so deeply that his departure led to what they must have felt to be an unbridgeable separation. They did not commit suicide, as Islam forbids it, but their lives now became full of endless sorrow and ceaseless tears.

The Messenger was kind and gentle to all women, and advised all other men to follow him in this regard.

Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas described his kindness as follows:

'Umar said: One day I went to the Prophet and saw him smiling. "May God make you smile forever, O Messenger of God," I said, and asked why he was smiling. "I smile at those women. They were chatting in front of me before you came. When they heard your voice, they all vanished," he answered still smiling. On hearing this answer, I raised my voice and told them: "O enemies of your own selves, you are scared of me, but you are not scared of the Messenger of God, and you don't show respect to him." "You are hard-hearted and strict," they replied. [4]

'Umar also was gentle to women. However, the most handsome man looks ugly when compared to Joseph's beauty. Likewise, 'Umar's gentleness and sensitivity seem like violence and severity when compared to those of the Prophet. The women had seen the Messenger's gentleness, sensitivity, and kindness, and so regarded 'Umar as strict and severe. Yet 'Umar shouldered the caliphate perfectly and became one of the greatest examples after the Prophet. He was a just ruler, and strove to distinguish right from wrong. His qualities enabled him to be caliph. Some of his qualities might seem rather severe; however, those very qualities enabled him to shoulder very demanding responsibilities.

The Prophet's consultation with his wives. The Messenger discussed matters with his wives as friends. Certainly he did not need their advice, since he was directed by Revelation. However, he wanted to teach his nation that Muslim men were to give women every consideration. This was quite a radical idea in his time, as it is today in many parts of the world. He began teaching his people through his own relationship with his wives.

For example, the conditions laid down in the Treaty of Hudaybiya disappointed and enraged many Muslims, for one condition stipulated that they could not make the pilgrimage that year. They wanted to reject the treaty, continue on to Makka, and face the possible consequences. But the Messenger ordered them to slaughter their sacrificial animals and take off their pilgrim attire. Some Companions hesitated, hoping that he would change his mind. He repeated his order, but they continued to hesitate. They did not oppose him; rather, they still hoped he might change his mind, for they had set out with the intention of pilgrimage and did not want to stop half way.

Noticing this reluctance, the Prophet returned to his tent and asked Umm Salama, his wife accompanying him at that time, what she thought of the situation. So she told him, fully aware that he did not need her advice. In doing this, he taught Muslim men an important social lesson: There is nothing wrong with exchanging ideas with women on important matters, or on any matters at all.

She said: "O Messenger of God, don't repeat your order. They may resist and thereby perish. Slaughter your sacrificial animal and change out of your pilgrim attire. They will obey you, willingly or not, when they see that your order is final." [5] He immediately took a knife in his hand, went outside, and began to slaughter his sheep. The Companions began to do the same, for now it was clear that his order would not be changed.

Counsel and consultation, like every good deed, were practiced by God's Messenger first within his own family and then in the wider community. Even today, we understand so little about his relationships with his wives that it is as if we are wandering aimlessly around a plot of land, unaware of the vast treasure buried below our feet.

Women are secondary beings in the minds of many, including those self-appointed defenders of women's rights as well as many self-proclaimed Muslim men. For us, a woman is part of a whole, a part that renders

Quote

"His readiness to undergo persecutions for his beliefs, the high moral character of the men who believed in him and looked up to him as leader, and the greatness of his ultimate achievement - all argue his fundamental integrity. To suppose Muhammad an impostor raises more problems than it solves. Moreover, none of the great figures of history is so poorly appreciated in the West as Muhammad."
-W. Montgomery Watt, MOHAMMAD AT MECCA, Oxford, 195

the other half useful. We believe that when the two halves come together, the true unity of a human being appears. When this unity does not exist, humanity does not exist—nor can Prophethood, sainthood, or even Islam.

Our master encouraged us through his enlightening words to behave kindly to women. He declared: "The most perfect believers are the best in character, and the best of you are the kindest to their families." [6] It is clear that women have received the true honor and respect they deserve, not just in theory but in actual practice, only once in history—during the period of Prophet Muhammad.

The choice God's Messenger gave to his wives. The wives of the Messenger were given the choice of remaining with him or leaving:

O Prophet, say to your wives: "If you desire the life of this world and its glitter, then come! I will provide for your enjoyment and set you free in a handsome manner. But if you seek God, His Messenger, and the Home of the Hereafter, verily God has prepared for you, the well-doers among you, a great reward." (33:28-29)

A few of his wives who wanted a more prosperous life asked: "Couldn't we live a little more luxuriously, like other Muslims do? Couldn't we have at least a bowl of soup everyday, or some prettier garments?" At first sight, such wishes might be considered fair and just. However, they were members of the family that was to be an example for all Muslim families until the Last Day.

The Messenger reacted by going into retreat. The news spread, and everyone rushed to the mosque and began to cry. The smallest grief felt by their beloved Messenger was enough to bring them all to tears, and even the smallest incident in his life would disturb them. Abu Bakr and 'Umar, seeing the event in a different light as their daughters were directly involved, rushed to the mosque. They wanted to see him, but he would not leave his retreat. Eventually, on their third attempt, they gained entry and began to rebuke their daughters. The Messenger saw what was happening, but only said: "I cannot afford what they want." [7] The Qur'an declared: O wives of the Prophet! You are not like any other women (33:32).

Others might save themselves by simply fulfilling their obligations, but those who were at the very center of Islam had to devote themselves fully, so that no weakness would appear at the center. There were advantages in being the Prophet's wife, but these advantages brought responsibilities and potential risks. The Messenger was preparing them as exemplars for all present and future Muslim women. He was especially worried that they might enjoy the reward for their good deeds in this world, and thereby be included in: You have exhausted your share of the good things in your life of the world and sought comfort in them (46:20).

Life in the Prophet's house was uncomfortable. For this reason, either explicitly or implicitly, his wives made some modest demands. As their status was unique, they were not expected to enjoy themselves in a worldly sense. Some godly people laugh only a few times during their lives; others never fill their stomachs. For example, Fudayl ibn 'Iyad never laughed. He smiled only once, and those who saw him do so asked him why he smiled, for they were greatly surprised. He told them: "Today, I learned that my son 'Ali died. I was happy to hear that God had loved him, and so I smiled." [8] If there were such people outside of the Prophet's household, his wives, who were even more pious and respectful of God and regarded as "mothers of the believers," would certainly be of a higher degree.

It is not easy to merit being together with the Messenger in this world and the Hereafter. Thus, these special women were put to a great test. The Messenger allowed them to choose his poor home or the

world's luxury. If they choose the world, he would give them whatever they wanted and then dissolve his marriage with them. If they choose God and His Messenger, they had to be content with their lives. This was a peculiarity of his family. Since this family was unique, its members had to be unique. The head of the family was chosen, as were the wives and children.

The Messenger first called 'A'isha and said: "I want to discuss something with you. You'd better talk with your parents before making a decision." Then he recited the verses mentioned above. Her decision was exactly as expected from a truthful daughter of a truthful father: "O Messenger of God, do I need to talk with my parents? By God, I choose God and His Messenger." [9]

'A'isha herself tells us what happened next: "The Messenger received the same answer from all his wives. No one expressed a different opinion. They all said what I had said." They did so because they were all at one with the Messenger. They could not differ. If the Messenger had told them to fast for a lifetime without break, they would have done so, and endured it with pleasure. However, they endured hardship until their deaths.

Some of his wives had enjoyed an extravagant lifestyle before their marriage to him. One of these was Safiyya, who had lost her father and husband, and had been taken prisoner, during the Battle of Khaybar. She must have been very angry with the Messenger, but when she saw him, her feelings changed completely. She endured the same destiny as the other wives. They endured it because love of the Messenger had penetrated their hearts.

Safiyya was a Jewess. Once, she was dismayed when this fact was mentioned to her sarcastically. She informed the Messenger, expressing her sadness. He comforted her saying: "If they repeat it, tell them: 'My father is Prophet Aaron, my uncle is Prophet Moses, and my husband is, as you see, Prophet Muhammad, the Chosen One. What do you have more than me to be proud of?'"

The Qur'an declares that his wives are the mothers of the believers (33:6). Although fourteen centuries have passed, we still feel delight in saying "my mother" when referring to Khadija, 'A'isha, Umm Salama, Hafsa, and his other wives. We feel this because of him. Some feel more love for these women than they do for their real mothers. Certainly, this feeling must have been deeper, warmer, and stronger in the Prophet's own time.

The Messenger was the perfect head of a family. Managing many women with ease, being a lover of their hearts, an instructor of their minds, an educator of their souls, he never neglected the affairs of the nation or compromised his duties.

The Messenger excelled in every area of life. People should not compare him to themselves or to the so-called great personalities of their age. Researchers should look at him, the one to whom angels are grateful, always remembering that he excelled in every way. If they want to look for Muhammad they must search for him in his own dimensions. Our imaginations cannot reach him, for we do not even know how to imagine properly. God bestowed upon him, as His special favor, superiority in every field.

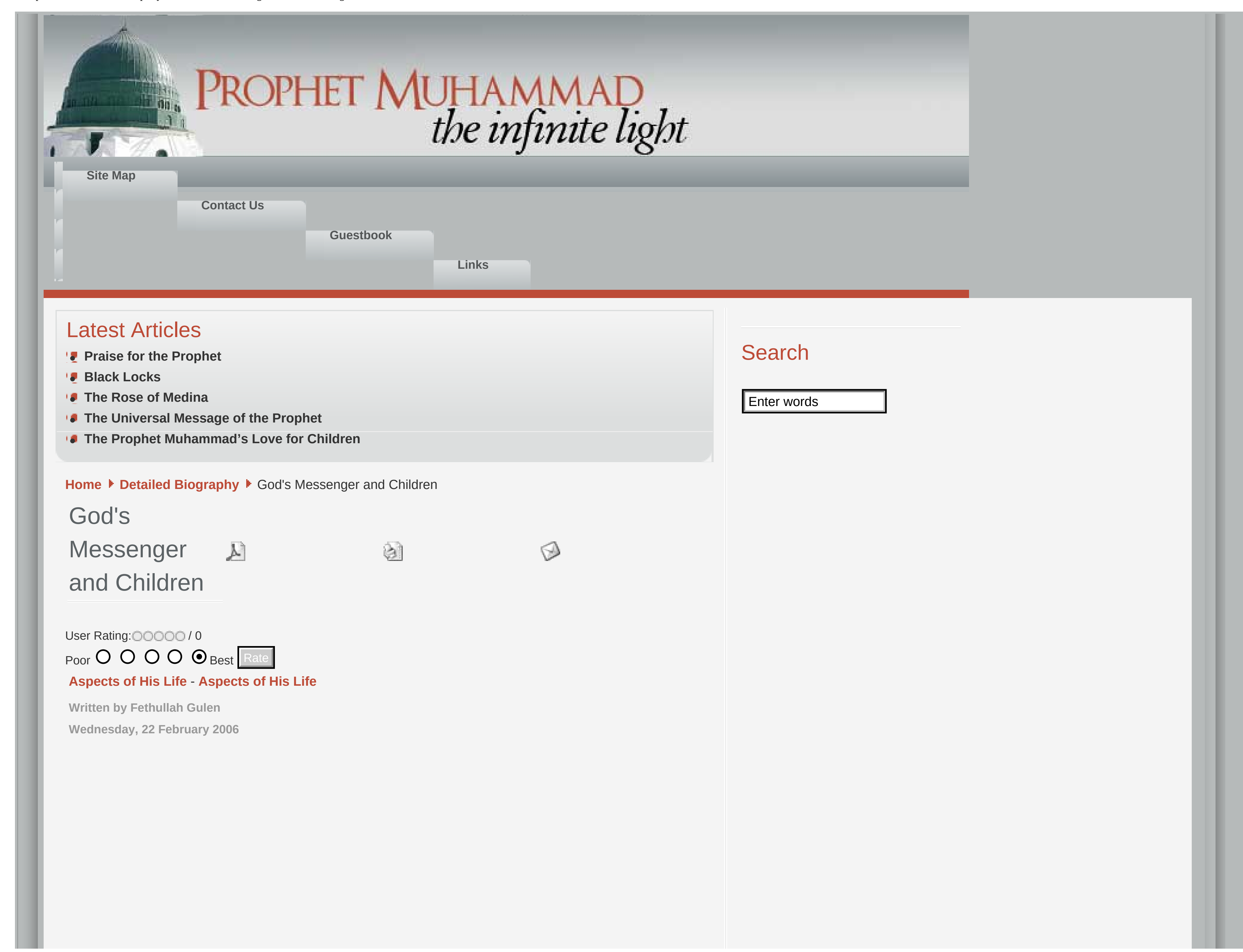
[1] Muslim, "Rada'," 47.
[2] Bukhari, "Salat," 80.
[3] Tirmidhi, "Nikah," 41:4; Bukhari, "Adab," 68.
[4] Bukhari, "Adab," 68.
[5] Bukhari, "Shurut," 15.
[6] Abu Dawud, "Sunna," 15; Tirmidhi, "Rada'," 11.

[7] Muslim, "Talaq," 34, 35.
[8] Abu Nu'aym, Hilyat al-Awliya', 8:100.
[9] Muslim, "Talaq," 35.

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God's Messenger and Children

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Aspects of His Life - **Aspects of His Life**

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

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He was an extraordinary husband, a perfect father, and a unique grandfather. He was unique in every way. He treated his children and grandchildren with great compassion, and never neglected to direct them to the Hereafter and good deeds. He smiled at them, caressed and loved them, but did not allow them to neglect matters related to the afterlife. In worldly matters he was extremely open; but when it came to maintaining their relationship with God, he was very serious and dignified. He showed them how to lead a humane life, and never allowed them to neglect their religious duties and become spoiled. His ultimate goal was to prepare them for the Hereafter. His perfect balance in such matters is another dimension of his Divinely inspired intellect.

In a hadith narrated by Muslim, Anas bin Malik, honored as the Messenger's servant for 10 continuous years, says: "I've never seen a man who was more compassionate to his family members than Muhammad." [1] If this admission were made just by us, it could be dismissed as unimportant. However, millions of people, so benign and compassionate that they would not even offend an ant, declare that he embraced everything with compassion. He was a human like us, but God inspired in him such an intimate affection for every living thing that he could establish a connection with all of them. As a result, he was full of extraordinary affection toward his family members and others.

All of the Prophet's sons had died. Ibrahim, his last son born to his Coptic wife Mary, also died in infancy. The Messenger often visited his son before the latter's death, although he was very busy. Ibrahim was looked after by a nurse. The Prophet would embrace, kiss, and caress him before returning home. [2] When Ibrahim died, the Prophet took him on his lap again, embraced him, and described his sorrow while on the brink of tears. Some were surprised. He gave them this answer: "Eyes may water and hearts may be broken, but we do not say anything except what God will be pleased with." He pointed to his tongue and said: "God will ask us about this." [3]

He carried his grandsons Hasan and Husayn on his back. Despite his unique status, he did this without hesitation to herald the honor that they would attain later. One time when they were on his back, 'Umar came into the Prophet's house and, seeing them, exclaimed: "What a beautiful mount you have!" The Messenger added immediately: "What beautiful riders they are!" [4] They may not have been aware that the Messenger had honored them. This special compliment was due to their future status as leaders and family heads of the Prophet's household. Among their descendants would be the greatest and most respected saints. His compliment was not only for his grandsons, but for all his offspring. For this reason, 'Abd al-Qadir Jilani, a well-known descendant of the Prophet's household, said: "The Messenger's blessed feet are on my shoulders, and mine are on the shoulders of all saints." This statement will probably stand for all saints to come.

The Messenger was completely balanced in the way he brought up his children. He loved his children and grandchildren very much, and instilled love in them. However, he never let his love for them be abused. None of them deliberately dared to do anything wrong. If they made an unintentional mistake, the Messenger's protection prevented them from going even slightly astray. He did this by wrapping them in love and an aura of dignity. For example, once Hasan or Husayn wanted to eat a date that had been given to distribute among the poor as alms. The Messenger immediately took it from his hand, and said: "Anything given as alms is forbidden to us." [5] In teaching them while they were young to be sensitive to forbidden acts, he established an important principle of education.

Whenever he returned to Madina, he would carry children on his mount. On such occasions, the Messenger embraced not only his grandchildren but also those in his house and those nearby. He conquered their hearts through his compassion. He loved all children.

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He loved his granddaughter Umama as much as he loved Hasan and Husayn. He often went out with her on his shoulders, and even placed her on his back while praying. When he prostrated, he put her down; when he had finished, he placed her on his back again. [6] He showed this degree of love to Umama to teach his male followers how to treat girls. This was a vital necessity, for only a decade earlier it had been the social norm to bury infant or young girls alive. Such public paternal affection for a granddaughter had never been seen before in Arabia.

The Messenger proclaimed that Islam allows no discrimination between son and daughter. How could there be? One is Muhammad, the other is Khadija; one is Adam, the other is Eve; one is 'Ali, the other is Fatima. For every great man there is a great woman.

Fatima, the daughter of the Messenger, is the mother of all members of his household. She is our mother, too. As soon as Fatima entered, the Messenger would stand, take her hands and make her sit where he had been sitting. He would ask about her health and family, show his paternal love for her, and compliment her.

He loved her like his own self, and Fatima, knowing how fond he was of her, loved him more than her own self. Her great mission was to be the seed for saints and godly people. She always watched her father and how he called people to Islam. She wept and groaned when the Messenger told her that he would die soon, and rejoiced when he told her that she would be the first family member to follow him. [7] Her father loved her, and she loved her father. The Messenger was totally balanced even in his love for Fatima. He trained her for the heights to which the human soul should rise.

The Messenger raised her, as well as all of his other family members and Companions, in a way to prepare them for the Hereafter. All of us were created for eternity, and so cannot be satisfied except through eternity and the Eternal Being. Therefore, we only want Him and long for Him, either consciously or unconsciously. The essence of all religions and the message of every Prophet was about the Hereafter. For this reason, the Messenger always sought to prepare his followers for the eternal peace and permanent bliss; meanwhile, his very existence among them was a sample of that peace and bliss they would taste in His presence.

He loved them and directed them toward the Hereafter, to the otherworldly and eternal beauty, and to God. For example, He once saw Fatima wearing a necklace (a bracelet, according to another version), and asked her: "Do you want the inhabitants of the Earth and the Heavens to say that my daughter is holding (or wearing) a chain from Hell?" These few words, coming from a man whose throne was established in her heart and who had conquered all her faculties, caused her to report, in her own words: "I immediately sold the necklace, bought and freed a slave, and then went to the Messenger. When I told him what I had done, he rejoiced. He opened his hands and thanked God: 'All thanks to God, Who protected Fatima from Hell.'" [8]

Fatima did not commit any sin by wearing this necklace. However, the Messenger wanted to keep her in the circle of the muqarrabin (those made near to God). His warning to her was based on taqwa (righteousness and devotion to God) and qurb (nearness to God). This was, in a sense, a neglect of worldly things. It is also an example of the sensitivity befitting the mother of the Prophet's household, which represents the Muslim community until the Last Day. To be a mother of such godly men like Hasan, Husayn, and Zayn al-'Abidin was certainly no ordinary task. The Messenger was preparing her to be the mother first of his own household (Ahl al-Bayt), and then of those who would descend from them, such great spiritual leaders as 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, Muhammad Baha' al-Din al-Naqshband, Ahmad Rifai', Ahmad Badawi, al-Shadhili, and the like.

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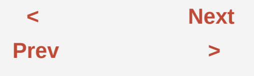
"His readiness to undergo persecutions for his beliefs, the high moral character of the men who believed in him and looked up to him as leader, and the greatness of his ultimate achievement - all argue his fundamental integrity. To suppose Muhammad an impostor raises more problems than it solves. Moreover, none of the great figures of history is so poorly appreciated in the West as Muhammad."

-W. Montgomery Watt, MOHAMMAD AT MECCA, Oxford, 195

It was as if he were telling her: "Fatima, you will marry a man ('Ali) and go to a house from which many golden 'rings' will emerge in the future. Forget the golden chain on your neck and concentrate on becoming the mother for the 'golden chains' of saints who will appear in the spiritual orders of Naqshbandiya, Rifa'iya, Shadhiliyya, and the like." It was difficult to fulfill such a role while wearing a golden necklace. For this reason, the Messenger was more severe with his own household than with others. He reminded them of the straight path by turning their faces toward the other world, closing all the windows opening on this world, and telling them that what they need is God.

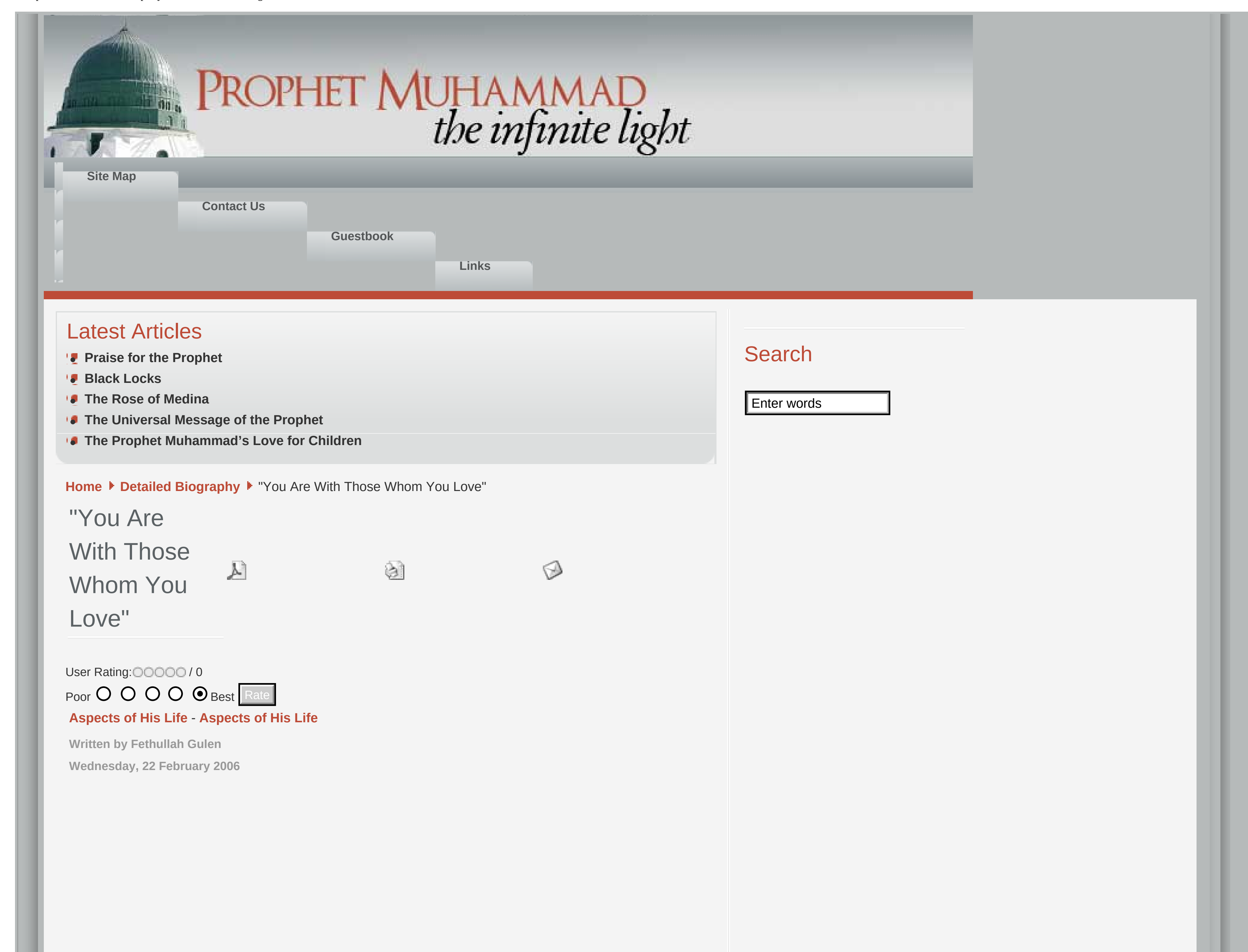
They were to lead their whole lives looking to the other world. For this reason, as a sign of his love, the Messenger purified his own household from all worldly rubbish and allowed no worldly dust to contaminate them. He turned their faces toward the exalted realms and prepared them for being together there.

[1] Muslim, "Fada'il," 63.
[2] Muslim, "Fada'il," 62.
[3] Bukhari, "Jana'iz," 44; Muslim, "Fada'il," 62; Ibn Ma'ja, "Jana'iz," 53.
[4] Hindi, Kanz al-'Ummal, 13:650.
[5] Ibn Hanbal, 2:279; Muslim, "Zakat," 161.
[6] Bukhari, "Adab," 18; Ibn Sa'd, Tabaqat, 8:39.
[7] Muslim, "Fada'il," 98, 99; Bukhari, "Manaqib, " 25.
[8] Nasa'i, "Zinat," 39.


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Aspects of His Life - Aspects of His Life

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

According to this hadith, if you love Prophet Muhammad you will be on his path, and those on his path will be together with him in the world beyond. To prepare his household and Companions for this gathering, the Messenger loved and embraced them. He used this love efficiently.

Bukhari and Muslim gave another example of how he educated them. 'Ali narrates that:

We had no servant in our house, and so Fatima did all the housework by herself. We lived in a house with just a small room. There, she would light a fire and try to cook. She often singed her clothes while trying to increase the fire by blowing. She also baked our bread and carried water. Her hands became covered in callouses from turning the millstone, as did her back from carrying water. Meanwhile some prisoners of war were brought to Madina. The Messenger gave them to those who applied. I suggested to Fatima that she ask for a servant from her father. And she did.

Fatima continues:

I went to my father, but he was not at home. 'A'isha said she would tell him when he came, so I returned home. As soon as we went to bed, the Messenger came in. We wanted to get up, but he did not let us and instead sat between us. I could feel the cold of his foot on my body. He asked what we wanted, and I explained the situation. The Messenger, in an awesome manner, replied: "Fatima, fear God and be faultless in all your duties to Him. I will tell you something. When you want to go to bed, say subhan Allah (All glory be to God), al-hamdu lillah (All praise be to God), and Allahu akbar (God is the greatest) 33 times each. This is better for you than having a maid. [1]

What he was actually saying through this conversation was:

I am turning your faces to the other-worldly realms. There are two ways for you to reach them and be together with me there: Fulfill your duties in perfect servitude to your Lord and fulfill your duties to your husband. If a maid takes your responsibilities, this may make you deficient. You must have two wings to fly to the higher ranks. How can a man or woman become a perfect slave of God? How can a person become a perfect human being and fulfill all of his or her obligations? It is your duty to find the answers to these questions. First of all, become a perfect slave of God. Then, become a perfect human being by performing your duties to 'Ali, a great man who represents all the saints who will descend from your family. If you do so, you will be with me in Heaven, where all the perfect things and perfect human beings shall come together.

I cannot help but digress to mention a fact about 'Ali. The Messenger gave him his daughter in marriage without hesitation, because he deserved to have such a wife and to be a Prophet's son-in-law. 'Ali was the king of saints, and was created in this nature. The Messenger once told him: "O 'Ali, every other Prophet had his own offspring. However, mine will come from you." [2] 'Ali is the father of the Prophet's household, namely, his grandchildren and later descendants. For this reason, obeying 'Ali means obeying the Messenger, and obeying the Messenger means obeying God. Also, those who love 'Ali should love the Prophet and follow his Sunna.

[1] Bukhari, "Fada'il al-Ashab," 9; Muslim, "Dhikr," 80, 81.
[2] Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Lemalar, 4. Lema.

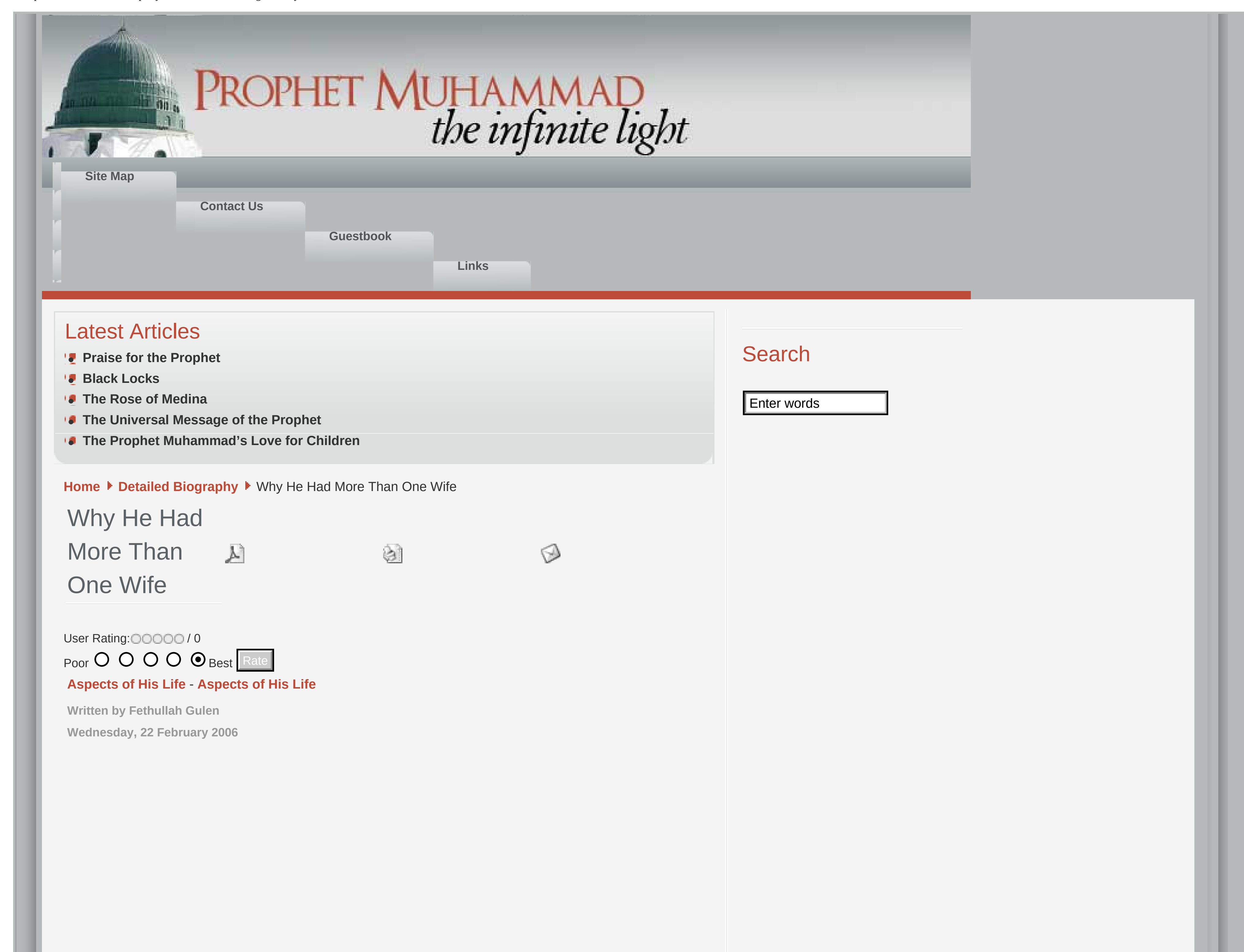
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“Through the Light he spreads, that place of universal mourning has been transformed into a place where God's Names and praises are recited in joy and ecstasy. The foreign, hostile beings have become friends and brothers.”
-Bediuzzaman Said Nursi

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Why He Had More Than One Wife

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

Some critics of Islam, either because they do not know the reasons for these marriages or because they want to portray him as a self-indulgent libertine, have accused the Messenger of character failings that are incompatible with having even average virtue, let alone with the virtue of God's final Messenger and best example for humanity. The facts, all of which are easily available in scores of biographies and wellauthenticated accounts of his sayings and actions, refute all such allegations and show that these marriages were part of a strictly disciplined life and yet another burden he had to bear.

The reasons behind his several marriages, while differing from case to case, all have to do with his role as the leader of the new Muslim community, and his responsibility to guide his followers toward the norms and values of Islam.

Muhammad married his first wife when he was 25 years old, 15 years before his Prophethood began. Given the cultural and moral climate in which he lived, not to mention his youth and other factors, he nevertheless enjoyed a sound reputation for chastity, integrity, and trustworthiness. As soon as he was called to Prophethood, he acquired enemies who made all sorts of charges. However, not even his fiercest enemies attacked his reputation, for doing so would have caused them to be ridiculed and discredited immediately. It is important to realize that his life was founded upon chastity and self-discipline from the outset, and so remained.

When he was 25 and in the prime of life, Muhammad married Khadija, a widow 15 years his senior. This marriage was very high and exceptional in the eyes of the Prophet and God. For 23 years, this devoted couple lived together in complete contentment and fidelity. The Prophet took no other wives while Khadija was alive, although public opinion and social norms would have allowed this. Even his enemies admitted that, during these years, they could find no flaw in his moral character. When she died during the eighth year of Prophethood, the Prophet found himself single once again, but this time with children. He remained unmarried for 4 or 5 years. All of his other marriages began when he was 53 years old or older, a age when very little real interest and desire for marriage remains, especially in Arabia where people grow old relatively earlier. Thus, allegations of licentiousness or self-indulgence are groundless.

People often ask how a Prophet can have more than one wife. There are three points to be made in answering this question. But, let's first see who is asking this question. Mostly, they are either Christians or Jews (People of the Book), or atheists. As such people usually know next to nothing about Islam, their question is based either on genuine ignorance or the desire to spread doubt among believers.

Those who neither believe in nor practice a religion have no right to reproach those who do. Such people are known for their casual relations and liaisons with numerous sexual partners and their refusal to follow any moral rules or ethics. Their disguised yet unrestrained self-indulgence, as well as their refusal to consider its consequences upon themselves and young people in general, not to mention their own children, has had serious social repercussions. Considering themselves free, they engage in what most societies consider to be immoral behavior: incest, homosexuality, polyandry (multiple husbands at the same time), and others. They never stop to consider what effect such practices have on the children of such unions. When we understand this, we can take their criticisms for what they are: a desire, whether conscious or otherwise, to drag believers into the mess of moral confusion and viciousness in which they themselves are trapped.

One wonders why Jews and Christians attack the Prophet for his multiple marriages. Have they forgotten that the great Hebrew patriarchs, considered Prophets in the Bible and in the Qur'an and revered by Jews, Christians, and Muslims as exemplars of moral excellence, all practiced polygamy? Moreover, as in the case of Prophet Solomon, they had far more wives than Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace. One

Quote

“How one man single-handedly, could weld warring tribes and wandering Bedouins into a most powerful and civilized nation in less than two decades.”
-THOMAS CARLYLE, HEROES AND HEROWORSHIP

wonders if they are moved more by their anti-Islam bias than genuine concern or interest.

Polygamy did not originate with the Muslims. Furthermore, in the case of the Prophet of Islam, it was an essential part of conveying the message of Islam and bringing unbelievers into its fold. For example, a religion that encompasses every sphere of life cannot be shy when it comes to intimate matters. Such things can only be known by one's spouse. Therefore, there must be women who can give clear instruction and advice, as such matters cannot be left to the usual allusions, hints, and innuendoes. The Prophet's wives functioned as teachers who conveyed and explained to other women, as well as men, Islamic norms and rules for correct domestic, marital, and other private concerns.

Some marriages were contracted for specific reasons, such as:

• Since his wives were young, middleaged, and elderly, the requirements and norms of Islamic law could be applied correctly to each stage of their lives and experiences. These provisions were learned and applied within the Prophet's household and then conveyed to other Muslims through his wives.

• Each wife was from a different clan or tribe, which allowed him to establish bonds of kinship and affinity throughout Arabia. This caused a profound attachment to him to spread among the diverse peoples of the new Muslim community, and also created and secured equality, brotherhood, and sisterhood among both in practical matters and in terms of religion.

• Both before and after the Prophet's death, each wife proved to be of great benefit and service. They conveyed and interpreted Islam to their people in all its inner and outer experiences, as well as the qualities, manners, and faith of the man who was living embodiment of the Qur'an in every aspect of his life. In this way, their people learned the Qur'an, the Traditions, tafsir (Qur'anic interpretation and commentary), and fiqh (understanding of the Islamic law), and so became fully aware of Islam's essence and spirit.

• These marriages allowed Prophet Muhammad to establish kinship ties throughout Arabia, and thus to move freely wherever he wished and to be accepted as a member in each family. In addition, everyone so connected to him felt that they could approach him personally for guidance on any issue. The entire tribe also benefited from this connection; they considered themselves fortunate and took pride in their new relationship. For example, such relationships were established for the Umayyads (through Umm Habiba), the Hashimites (through Zaynab bint Jahsh), and the Banu Makhzum (through Umm Salama).

So far, what we have said is general and could, in some respects, be true of all Prophets. However, now we will give brief life sketches of these women, not in the order of marriage but from a different perspective.

Khadija was the Prophet's first wife. When they married, she was 40; he was 25. She was the mother of all his children except for his son Ibrahim, who did not survive infancy. But she was more than just his wifes—she was his friend who shared his inclinations and ideals to a remarkable degree. Their marriage was wonderfully blessed, and they lived together in profound harmony for 23 years. Through every outrage and persecution heaped upon him by the Makkans, Khadija was his dearest companion and helper. He loved her deeply, and married no other woman while she was alive.

This marriage presents the ideal forms of intimacy, friendship, mutual respect, support, and consolation. Though faithful and loyal to all his wives, he never forgot Khadija; for the rest of his life, he often mentioned her virtues and merits. The Prophet did not remarry for 4 or 5 years after her death. Providing his children's daily food and provisions, bearing their troubles and hardships, caused him to be both a father and a

mother. To allege that such a man was a sensualist or lusted after women is beyond belief. If there were even the least grain of truth in it, he could not have lived as history records that he did.

'A'isha, his second wife (though not in the order of marriage), was the daughter of Abu Bakr, his closest friend and devoted follower. One of the earliest converts to Islam, this man had long hoped to cement the deep attachment between himself and the Prophet by giving 'A'isha to him in marriage. His acceptance of this arrangement conferred the highest honor and courtesy on a man who had shared all the good and bad times with him throughout his mission.

'A'isha, who proved to be a remarkably intelligent and wise woman, had both the nature and temperament to carry forward the work of Prophetic mission. Her marriage prepared her to be a spiritual guide and teacher to all women. She became a major student and disciple of the Prophet and through him, like so many Muslims of that blessed time, she matured and perfected her skills and talents so that she could join him in the abode of bliss both as wife and as student. Her life and service to Islam after her marriage prove that such an exceptional person was worthy to be the Prophet's wife.

Over time, she proved to be one of the greatest authorities on Hadith, an excellent Qur'anic commentator, and a most distinguished and knowledgeable expert (faqih) in Islamic law. She truly represented the inner and outer qualities and experiences of Prophet Muhammad through her unique understanding.

Umm Salama, of the Makhzum clan, was first married to her cousin. The couple had embraced Islam at the very beginning and emigrated to Abyssinia to avoid Qurayshi persecution. After their return, they migrated to Madina with their four children. Her husband participated in many battles and, severely wounded at Uhud, attained martyrdom shortly thereafter. Abu Bakr and 'Umar proposed marriage, aware of her needs and suffering as a widow with children but without means to support them. She refused, believing that no one could be better than her late husband.

Some time after that, the Prophet offered to marry her. This was quite right and natural, for this great woman, who had never shied from sacrifice and suffering for Islam, was now alone after having passed many years among the noblest Arab clan. She could not be neglected and left to beg her way in life. Considering her piety, sincerity, and all that she had suffered, she deserved to be helped. By marrying her, the Prophet was doing what he had been doing since his youth, namely, befriending those lacking friends, supporting those without support, and protecting those without protection.

Umm Salama also was intelligent and quick in comprehension. She had all the capacities and gifts to become a spiritual guide and teacher. After her marriage to the Prophet, she became a new student in the school of knowledge and guidance, one to whom all women would be grateful. Let us recall that, at this time, the Prophet was approaching the age of sixty. His marriage to a widow with four children and acceptance of all related expenses and responsibilities can be understood only in terms of his infinite reserves of humanity and compassion.

Umm Habiba was the daughter of Abu Sufyan who, for a long time, was the Prophet's bitterest foe and strongest supporter of unbelief. But despite this, his daughter was one of the earliest converts to Islam and emigrated to Abyssinia with her husband. Her husband died there, leaving her alone and desperate in exile.

At that time, the few Companions had problems supporting even themselves. She was faced with several options: conversion to Christianity in return for Abyssinian Christian support (unthinkable); return to her father's home, now a headquarters of the war against Islam (unthinkable); or go begging from household to

household. This last option was just as unthinkable as the other two, but had the added disadvantage that if she were forced to do so, she would bring shame upon her family name, as it was one of the richest and noblest Arab families.

God recompensed Umm Habiba for all that she lost or sacrificed in the way of Islam. She had been reduced to a lonely exile and a grieving widow in an insecure environment among people who were racially and religiously different from her. The Prophet, learning of her plight, sent an offer of marriage through the king Negus. This noble and generous action is a practical proof of: We have not sent you save as a mercy for all creatures (21:107).

Through this marriage, Abu Sufyan's powerful family was linked with the person and household of the Prophet, a fact that caused them to rethink their opposition. It also is correct to trace this marriage's influence beyond Abu Sufyan's immediate family and to the Umayyads, who ruled the Muslims for almost a hundred years. This clan, whose members had been the most hostile to Islam, went on to produce some of Islam's most renowned warriors, administrators, and governors in the early period. It was his marriage to Umm Habiba that began this change: the Prophet's depth of generosity and magnanimity of soul surely overwhelmed them.

Zaynab bint Jahsh was a lady of noble birth and descent, as well as a close relative of the Prophet. She also was a woman of great piety, who fasted a great deal, kept long vigils, and gave generously to the poor. When the Prophet made known to her parents that he wished her to marry Zayd (at one time his adopted son), both she and her family were at first unwilling. The family had hoped to marry their daughter to the Prophet. Naturally, when they realized that it was the Prophet's wish that she marry Zayd, they all consented out of their love for the Prophet and his authority.

As mentioned above, the Messenger made this marriage to abolish several pagan customs: a freed exslave could not marry a freeborn woman, racial prejudice (Zayd was black; Zaynab was not), an adoptive father could not marry his adopted son's exwife or widow. The marriage did not bring happiness to either person. Both were devout Muslims and loved the Prophet, but they were not compatible. Zayd several times asked the Prophet to allow him to divorce Zaynab, but the Prophet told him to be patient and not divorce her. Then, once when the Prophet was in conversation, Gabriel came and a Divine Revelation was given to him. This verse announced the Prophet's marriage to Zaynab as a bond already contracted: We have married her to you (33:37). There was no lust involved here. Rather, it was such a severe trial that 'A'isha later said: "Had the Messenger of God been inclined to suppress anything of what was revealed to him, he would surely have suppressed this verse."

Juwayriya bint Harith, daughter of the defeated Banu Mustaliq clan's chief, was captured during a military expedition. She was held, like other members of her proud family, alongside her clan's "common" people. She was in considerable distress when taken to the Prophet, not least because her kinsmen had lost everything and she really hated the Muslims. The Prophet understood her wounded pride and dignity, and how to heal them. He agreed to pay her ransom, set her free, and offered to marry her. How gladly Juwayriya accepted this offer can easily be imagined. About 100 families were freed when the Ansar and the Muhajirun learned that the Bani Mustaliq were now related to the Prophet by marriage. A tribe so honored could not be allowed to remain in slavery. In this way, the hearts of Juwayriyah and all her people were won.

Safiyya was the daughter of Huyayy, a chieftain of the Jews of Khaybar, who had persuaded the Bani Qurayza to break their treaty with the Prophet. She had seen her family and relatives oppose the Prophet since her youth. In the Battle of Khaybar, she lost her father, brother, and husband, and herself was

captured.

The attitudes and actions of her family and relatives might have caused her to nurture a deep hatred of and desire for revenge against the Muslims. But 3 days before the Prophet's appearance in front of Khaybar's citadel, Safiyya had dreamed of a brilliant moon coming from Madina, moving toward Khaybar, and falling into her lap. She later said: "When I was captured, I began to hope that my dream would come true." When she was brought before the Prophet, he generously set her free and offered her the choice of remaining a Jewess and returning to her people or entering Islam and becoming his wife. "I chose God and his Messenger," she said. They were married shortly thereafter.

Elevated to the Prophet's household and now a "mother of the believers," she experienced firsthand the Companions' honorable and respectful treatment. She saw the refinement and true courtesy of those who had submitted their hearts and minds to God. Her attitude to her past experiences changed altogether, and she came to appreciate the great honor of being the Prophet's wife. This marriage also changed the attitude of many Jews, as they came to see and know the Prophet closely.

Sawda bint Zam'a was Sakran's widow. This couple had been among the first to embrace Islam and emigrate to Abyssinia. Sakran died in exile and left his wife utterly destitute. To relieve her distress, Prophet Muhammad married her, although he was facing great difficulties in meeting his own daily needs. This marriage took place some time after Khadija's death.

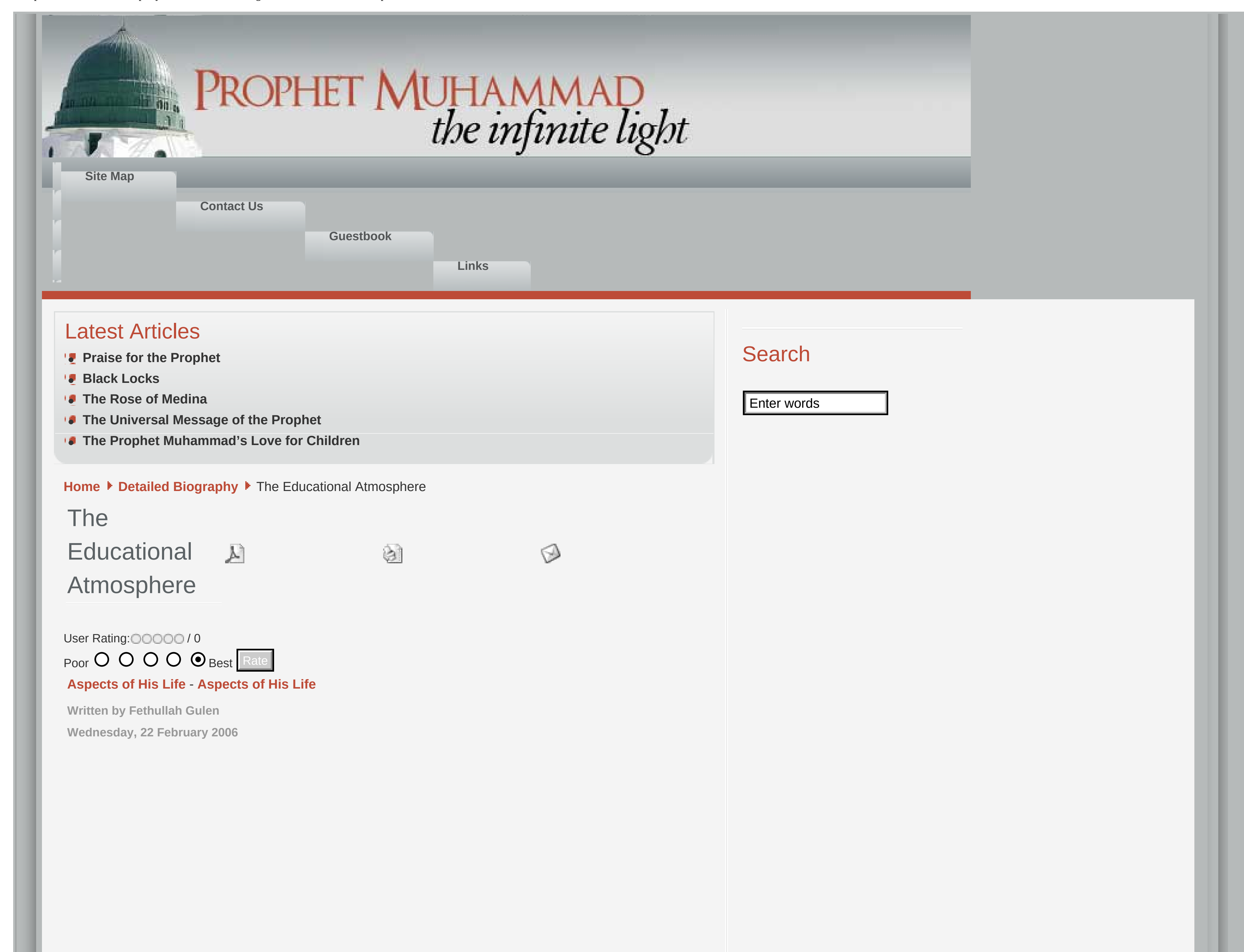
Hafsa was the daughter of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, the future second caliph of Islam. Also an exile in Abyssinia and then an immigrant in Madina, she was widowed when her husband attained martyrdom in the path of God. She remained without a husband for a while. 'Umar wished for the honor and blessing of being close to the Prophet in this world and the Hereafter, just as Abu Bakr had, and so the Prophet married her to protect and help his faithful disciple's daughter.

Such were the circumstances and motives behind the Prophet's several marriages. There was no lust involved. Rather, he married them to provide helpless or widowed women with a dignified subsistence; to console and honor enraged or estranged tribespeople by bringing former enemies into some degree of relationship and harmony; to gain certain uniquely gifted individuals, in particular some exceptionally talented women, for the cause of Islam; to establish new norms of relationship between different people within the unifying brotherhood of faith in God; and to honor with family bonds the men who were to be his immediate political successors. These marriages had nothing to do with self-indulgence, personal desire, or lust. With the exception of 'A'isha, all of his wives were widows, and all of his marriages (except for that with Khadijah) were contracted when he was already an old man. Far from being acts of self-indulgence, these marriages were acts of self-discipline.

The Prophet was given a special Divine dispensation, one unique to his person, to have this number of wives. The Revelation restricting polygamy came after he had contracted all of these marriages. After that event, he also was forbidden to marry again.

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The Educational Atmosphere

Aspects of His Life - **Aspects of His Life**

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

Consider the following verse:

It is He who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger of their own, to recite to them His signs, to purify them, and to instruct them in Scripture and Wisdom, although they had been, before, in manifest error. (62:2)

Some of these words are very interesting. God is mentioned in the third person, because the ignorant, primitive, and savage Arabs did not know Him. As there was no "He" in their minds, God first emphasizes the darkness of their nature, their great distance from Him, and indicates that they cannot be addressed directly by Him.

Then God calls them unlettered. They were not all illiterate, but they had no knowledge of God and the Messenger. God, by His infinite Power, sent to this trifling community a Messenger with the greatest will-power, the most sublime nature, the deepest spirituality, and the highest morality, by means of whom He would instruct them in how to become geniuses who would one day govern humanity.

The word among shows that the Messenger was one of them, but only in the sense of being unlettered. Being chosen by God, he could not possibly belong to the Age of Ignorance (pre-Islamic Arabia). However, he had to be unlettered so that God would teach him what he needed to know. God would remove him from his people, educate him, and make him a teacher for all unlettered people.

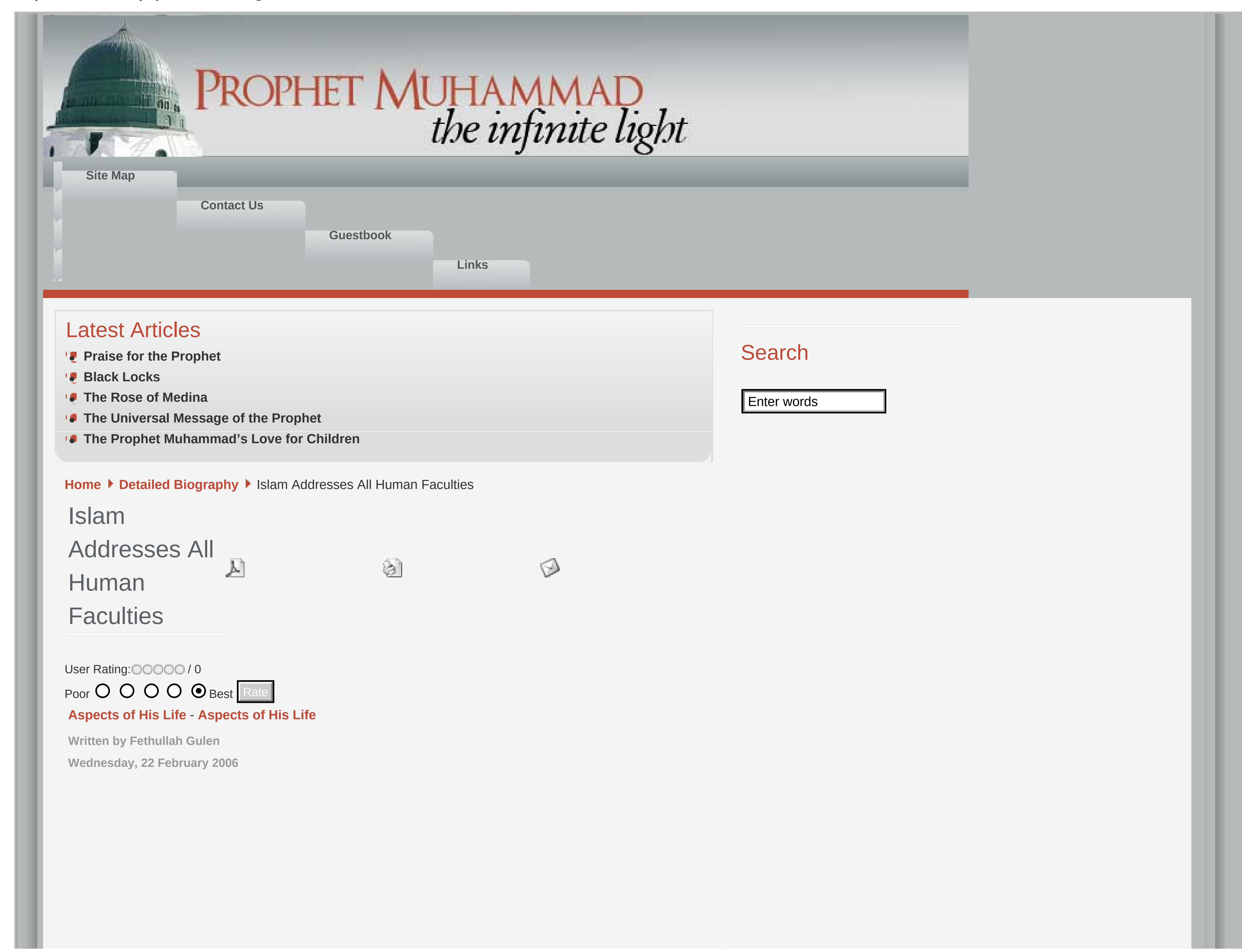
The phrases to recite to them His signs and to purify them point out that He teaches them about the meanings of the Qur'an and of creation in a gradual manner, and informs them how to become perfect human beings by striving for spiritual perfection. He guides them to higher ranks by explaining the Qur'an and the universe to them, and showing them in minute detail how to lead a balanced and exemplary life in every sphere of activity.

The sentence although they had been, before, in manifest error indicates that God would purify and educate them even though they had gone astray. He did all of this through an unlettered Messenger and by teaching them the Qur'an. Throughout history and even today, this Book has met the needs of countless brilliant scientists, scholars, and saints.

After the Prophet, humanity saw his flag waving everywhere for centuries. Those who follow him, both now and in the past, reach the highest spiritual realms on wings of sainthood, piety, righteousness, knowledge, and science. Those who climbed the steps of good conduct and spirituality, and knowledge and science, both now and in the past, saw in each step the "footprints" of Prophet Muhammad and greet him with "God bless you." They will do the same again in the near future. All so-called original ideas will disappear one by one, like candles blown out, leaving only one "sun"—the Qur'an—that will never set. Its flag will be the only one waving on the horizon, and every generation will rush to it, breaking the chains around their necks.

Quote

"Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, unveiled the transitory nature of this world and death, and showed the grave to be a waiting room opening onto the realm of eternal happiness. He led every heart seeking happiness, regardless of place or time, to the fountain of Khadr, and enabled them to drink the elixir of immortality."
-Fethullah Gulen



Islam Addresses All Human Faculties

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

As is explicit in the abovementioned verse, the Messenger's method of education does not just purify our evil-commanding selves; rather, it is universal in nature and raises human hearts, spirits, minds, and souls to their ideal level. He respected and inspired reason; in fact, he led it to the highest rank under the intellect of Revelation.

The universal truths of the Qur'an also state this fact. Moreover, the Message touches all of our inner and outer senses, makes its followers rise on the wings of love and compassion, and takes them to places beyond their imagination. His universal call encompasses, in addition to the rules of good conduct and spirituality, all principles of economics, finance, administration, education, justice, and international law. He opened the doors of economic, social, administrative, military, political, and scientific institutions to his students, whose minds and spirits he trained and developed to become perfect administrators, the best economists, the most successful politicians and unique military geniuses.

If there had been any lack in his teaching of humanity, the aim of his Prophethood could not have been realized so fully. He said:

Each Prophet before me built some part of this marvelous building, but there was a gap that needed to be closed. Every person passing by would say: "I wonder when this building will be completed." The one who completes it is me. After me, there is no longer any defect in the structure. [1]

The Qur'an affirms this: This day I have completed your religion for you (5:3). In short, the Prophet reformed, completed, and perfected the ways of life that had been lacking, had become deficient, or had deviated from the Will of God.

All previous Prophets were sent to a certain people and for a fixed time. However, as God chose Prophet Muhammad and Islam for all times and peoples, Islam is the perfection of His universal favor upon His creation. He fashioned Islam in such a way that it pleases everybody. Therefore, rather than trying to find fault with the Message and the principles relayed by The Messenger, people should seek these truths and principles in order to design their lives according to them.

The Prophet was a man who completed, perfected, and reformed. He transformed an illiterate, savage people into an army of blessed saints, illustrious educators, invincible commanders, eminent statesmen, and praiseworthy founders of the most magnificent civilization in history.

An educator's perfection depends on the greatness of his or her ideal and the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of his or her listeners. Even before Prophet Muhammad's demise, the instructors and spiritual guides he dispatched were traveling in a vast area stretching from Egypt to Iran and from Yemen to Caucasia for the sole purpose of spreading what they had learned from him. In succeeding centuries, peoples of different traditions, conventions, and cultures—Persians and Turanians, Chinese and Indians, Romans and Abyssinians, Arabs and some Europeans—rushed to his Message.

An educator's greatness also depends on the continuation of his or her principles. No one can deny that people all over the world accept his Message and adopt his principles. By God's Will and Power, most of humanity will embrace Islam in the near future.

Remember that The Messenger appeared among a wild and primitive people. They drank alcohol, gambled, and indulged in adultery without shame. Prostitution was legal, and whorehouses were indicated by a special flag. Indecency was so extreme that a man would be embarrassed to be called a man. People

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were constantly fighting among themselves, and no one had ever been able to unify them into a strong nation. Everything evil could be found in Arabia. However, the Prophet eradicated these evils and replaced them with such deeprooted values and virtues that his people became the leaders and teachers of the civilized world.

Even today we cannot reach their ranks. This has been acknowledged by such Western intellectuals as Isaac Taylor, Robert Briffault, John Davenport, M. Pickhtal, P. Bayle, and Lamartine. [2]

God creates living things from lifeless things. He grants life to soil and rock. The Prophet transformed "rocks, soil, coal, and copper" into "gold and diamonds." Just consider the cases of Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, 'Ali, Khalid, 'Uqba ibn Nafi', Tariq ibn Ziyad, Abu Hanifa, Imam Shafi'i, Bayazid al-Bistami, Muhyi al-Din ibn al-'Arabi, Biruni, Zahrawi, and hundreds of thousands of others, all of whom were brought up in his school. The Messenger never allowed human faculties to remain undeveloped. He developed them and replaced weakness with marvelous competency. As a great thinker recalled:

'Umar had the potential to be a great man even before he embraced Islam. After his conversion, he became a powerful yet very gentle man who would not step on an ant or kill even a grasshopper. Such was his compassion, sensitivity, and understanding of justice and administration that he used to say: 'If a sheep falls into the Tigris because of a destroyed bridge, God will ask me about it.'

We cannot eradicate such a small habit as smoking, despite all our modern facilities and practically daily symposia and conferences to combat it. Medical science says smoking causes cancer of the larynx, mouth, esophagus, windpipe, and lungs; however, people insist on smoking. On the other hand, the Messenger eradicated countless ingrained bad habits and replaced them with laudable virtues and habits. Those who saw them used to say: "My God, his followers are superior even to the angels." When these people pass over the Bridge above Hell with their light spreading everywhere, even the angels will ask in awe: "Are they Prophets or angels?" In fact, they are neither Prophets nor angels; they are the educated people of the nation of Prophet Muhammad.

Prophet Muhammad had a holistic view of each individual. He took all of their mental and spiritual capacities and developed them, turning his own wretched people into paragons of virtue. His wisdom in assessing such potential is another proof of his Prophethood.

[1] Bukhari, "Manaqib," 18; Muslim, "Fada'il," 20-23.
[2] To give just one example, Lamartine asks: "Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas, of a cult without images; the founder of twenty terrestrial states and of one spiritual state, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask: Is there any man greater than he?" (Historie de la Turquie, vol. 2, pp. 276–7.) (Tr.)

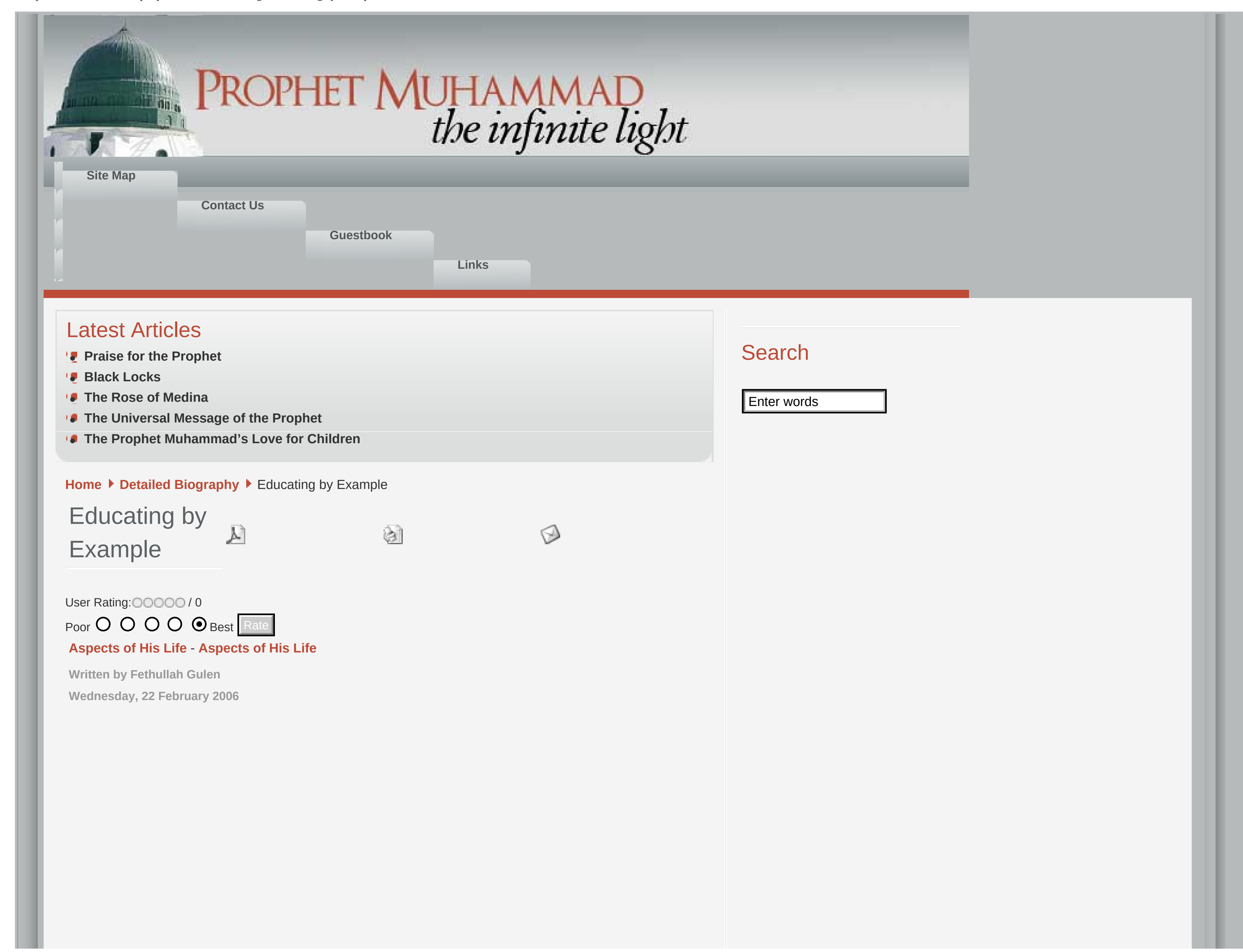
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Quote

“I BELIEVE IN ONE GOD, AND MAHOMET, AN APOSTLE OF GOD' is the simple and invariable profession of Islam. The intellectual image of the Deity has never been degraded by any visible idol; the honor of the Prophet has never transgressed the measure of human virtues; and his living precepts have restrained the gratitude of his disciples within the bounds of reason and religion.”
-EDWARD GIBBON and SIMON OCKLEY, HISTORY OF THE SAR

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Educating by Example

Aspects of His Life - Aspects of His Life

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

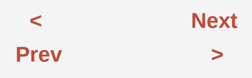
The Messenger represented and expressed what he wanted to teach through his actions, and then translated his actions into words. How to be in awe of God, how to be humble, how to prostrate with deep feelings, how to bow, how to sit in prayer, how to cry to God at night—all of these he first did himself and then taught to others. As a result, whatever he preached was accepted immediately in his house and by his followers, for his words penetrated all of their hearts. After him, humanity saw his standard carried everywhere by people raised on the wings of sainthood, purification, devotion to God, and desire to be close to Him. Wherever they went, they walked in the footsteps of Prophet Muhammad. Others will do so in the future.

In the house of the Messenger there was a permanent sense of awe. Those who caught a glimpse of him could feel the allure of Heaven and the terror of Hell. He swayed to and fro during prayer, trembling with the fear of Hell and flying on wings of the desire of Heaven. All who saw him remembered God. Imam al-Nasa'i narrates: "While the Messenger was praying, a sound, like a boiling pot, was heard." [1] He always prayed with a burning and weeping heart. 'A'isha often found him in the presence of his Master, prostrating and trembling. [2]

His behavior inspired and benefited everyone around him. The children and wives of every Messenger had the same awe and fear, as the Messengers preached, ordered, related what they practiced and experienced, and gave examples through their actions. We can assess a person's impact through his or her behavior while at home. If all pedagogues gathered and merged their acquired knowledge about education, they could not be as effective as a Prophet.

Many of his descendants have shone among their respective generations like a sun, a moon, or a star. He brought up his Companions so perfectly that almost none of them became heretics. [3] None of his progeny has ever become a heretic, which is a distinction unique to him. Heretics and apostates have appeared among the households and descendants of many saintly people, but none of Muhammad's descendants have betrayed the roots of their household. If there have been a few exceptions unknown to us and history, they do not negate the rule. [4]

[1] Nasa'i, "Sahw," 18.
[2] Nasa'i, "Ishrat al-Nisa'," 4.
[3] Very few among the Companions; the apostates after his death are not Companions.)
[4] There's a rule in logic: Exceptions do not invalidate the rule. We do not know of any heretics among his descendants. But this does not mean that there will not be, because it is possible. Considering this possibility, we speak with caution.)


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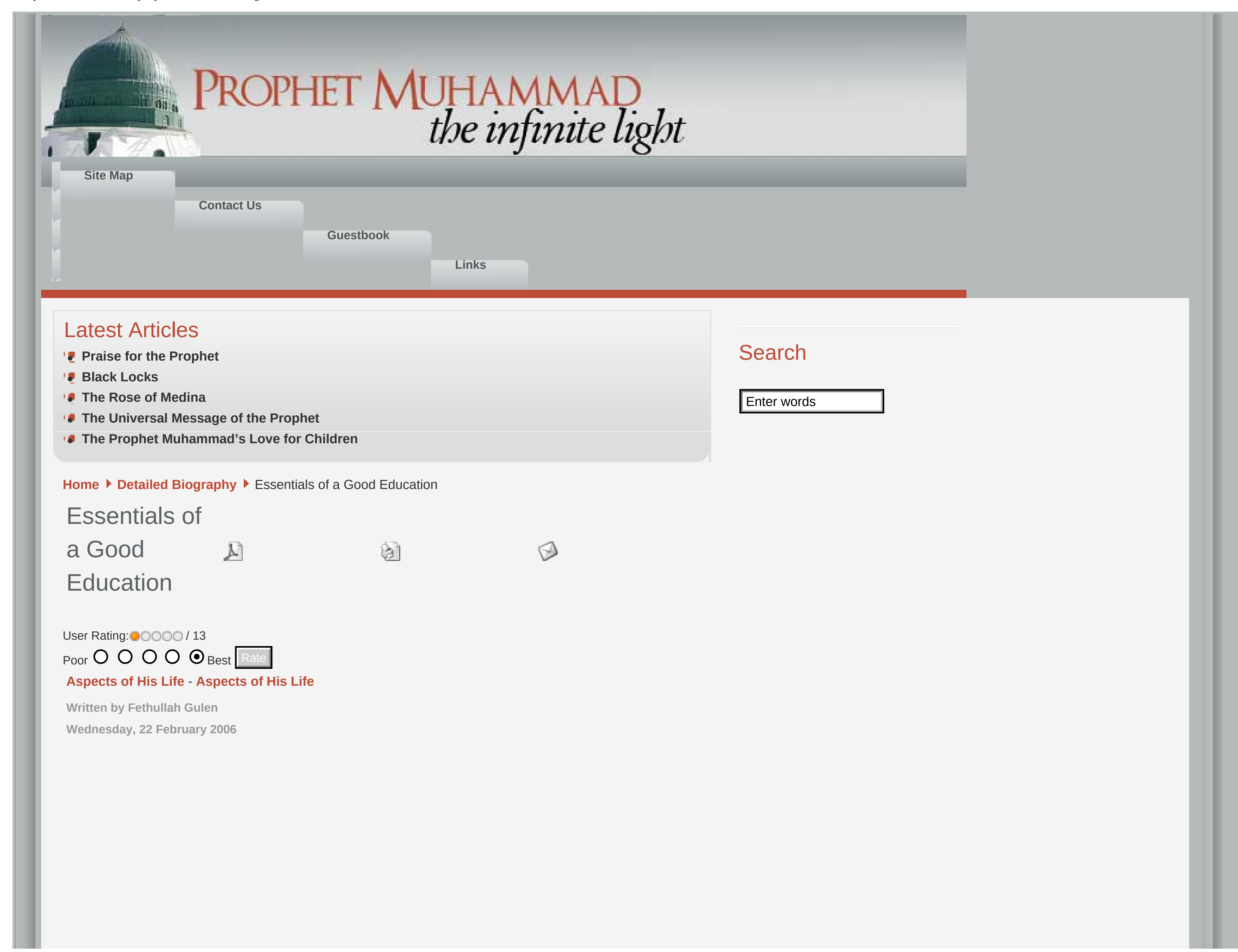
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“The personality of Muhammad, it is most difficult to get into the whole truth of it. Only a glimpse of it I can catch. What a dramatic succession of picturesque scenes! There is Muhammad, the Prophet. There is Muhammad, the Warrior; Muhammad, the Businessman; Muhammad, the Statesman; Muhammad, the Orator; Muhammad, the Reformer; Muhammad, the Refuge of Orphans; Muhammad, the Protector of Slaves; Muhammad, the Emancipator of Women; Muhammad, the Judge; Muhammad, the Saint. All in all these magnificent roles, in all these departments of human activities, he is alike a hero.”

-K. S. RAMAKRISHNA RAO,
Muhammad, The Prophet of Is



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Essentials of a Good Education

Aspects of His Life - Aspects of His Life

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

A real educator must have several virtues, among them the following:

First: Give due importance to all aspects of a person's mind, spirit, and self, and to raise each to its proper perfection. The Qur'an mentions the evil-commanding self that drags people, like beasts with ropes around their necks, wherever it wants to go, and goads them to obey their bodily desires. In effect, the evil-commanding self wants people to ignore their God-given ability to elevate their feelings, thoughts, and spirits.

The Qur'an quotes the Prophet Joseph as saying: Surely the self commands evil, unless my Master has mercy (12:53). Commanding evil is inherent in the self's nature. However, through worship and discipline, the self can be raised to higher ranks, to a position where it accuses itself for its evils and shortcomings (75:2), and then still higher where God addresses it: O self at peace! Return unto your Master, well-pleased, well-pleasing (89:27-28).

Higher than the self at peace (at rest and contented) is the self perfectly purified. Those who rise to this degree of attainment are the nearest to God. When you look at them you remember God, for they are like polished mirrors in which all of His attributes are reflected. The Companions' desire to follow the training provided by Prophet Muhammad enabled almost all of them to reach this degree of moral and spiritual perfection; millions of people have followed—and continue to follow—their example.

Second: An education system is judged by its universality, comprehensiveness, and quality of its students. His students were ready to convey his Message throughout the world. The Message they conveyed, being universal in nature and valid for all times and places, found a ready acceptance among people of different races, religious background, intellectual levels, and age differences from modern-day Morocco and Spain to the Philippines, from the Russian steppes to the heart of Africa. Its principles remain valid. Despite numerous upheavals and changes, as well as social, economic, intellectual, scientific, and technological revolutions, his system remains the most unique and original, so much so that it is the hope of the future of humanity.

Third: An education system is judged by its ability to change its students. The example of smoking was mentioned earlier, as was that of how Islam and the Prophet's spread of it transformed the tribes of Arabia into their exact opposite within the space of just two or three decades. To those who deny or question his Prophethood, we challenge them to go anywhere in the world and accomplish, over the course of 100 years, even one-hundredth of what he accomplished in the deserts of Arabia 1,400 years ago. Let them take all of the experts they can gather, and then we will wait to see their results.

When Prophet Muhammad was conveying the Message, Arabia was isolated from its neighbors by vast deserts and rightfully could be considered one of the most backward areas of the world in terms of its cultural, intellectual, and moral life. The Hijaz, where the Prophet was born, had experienced no social evolution and had attained no intellectual development worthy of mention. Dominated by superstitions, barbarous and violent customs, and degraded moral standards, people lived in savagery. They drank wine, gambled, and indulged in what even average societies consider immoral sexual activities. Prostitutes advertised their services by hanging a flag on the doors of their houses.

It was a land without law and a government. Might was right, as in many parts of the world today, and looting, arson, and murder were commonplace. Any trivial incident could provoke intertribal feuding, which sometimes developed into peninsula-wide wars.

These were the people Prophet Muhammad appeared among. With the Message he relayed from God and

Quote

"My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular level."
-Michael H. Hart, THE 100: A

his way of preaching it, he eradicated barbarism and savagery, adorned Arabia's wild and unyielding peoples with all praiseworthy virtues, and made them teachers of the world. His domination was not physical or military; rather, he conquered and subjugated them by becoming the beloved of their hearts, the teacher of their minds, the trainer of their souls, and the ruler of their spirits. He eradicated their evil qualities, and implanted and inculcated in his followers' hearts exalted qualities in such a way that they became second nature to all of his followers.

But this transformation was not limited only to the people of his own time and place, for this process continues even today wherever his Message spreads. It was not only quickly accepted in Arabia, Syria, Iraq, Persia, Egypt, Northern Africa, and Spain at its first outburst, but, with the exception of the now-vanished brilliant civilization of Islamic Spain, it has never lost its vantage ground. Since it first appeared, it has never stopped spreading.

Many world-renowned individuals have been raised in the school of Muhammad. Certainly, we come across numerous great historical figures in other schools of education as well. God has honored humanity with great heroes, eminent statesmen, invincible commanders, inspired saints, and great scientists. However, most of them have not made a deep impression on more than one or two aspects of human life, for they confine themselves to those fields. But since Islam is a Divine way for all fields of life, a Divine system encompassing all aspects of life—"like a perfect work of architecture all of whose parts are harmoniously conceived to complement and support each other, nothing lacking, with the result of an absolute balance and solid composure," according the Muhammad Asad, a Jewish convert—its students usually combine within themselves the spiritual and the rational, the intellectual and the material, the worldly with the other-worldly, the ideal with the real, and the scientific and the revealed (by God).

At its very outset, Islam abolished tribal conflicts and condemned racial and ethnic discrimination. The Prophet put the Qurayshi chiefs under Zayd's command (an emancipated black slave), and innumerable scholars and scientists, commanders, and saints appeared among conquered peoples. Among them was Tariq ibn Ziyad, an emancipated Berber slave who conquered Spain with 90,000 valiant warriors and laid the foundations of one of the most splendid civilizations of world history. After this victory, he went to the palace where the defeated king's treasury was kept. He said to himself:

Be careful, Tariq. Yesterday you were a slave with a chain around your neck. God emancipated you, and today you are a victorious commander. However, you will change tomorrow into flesh rotting under earth. Finally, a day will come when you will stand in the Presence of God.

The world and its pomp could not attract him, and he continued to live a very simple life. What kind of education could transform a slave into such a dignified and honorable person?

However, his conquest of Spain was not his real victory. This came when he stood before the treasury of the Spanish king and reminded himself that one day he would die and face God. As a result of this self-advice, he took none of the treasure for himself.

'Uqba ibn Nafi' was another great commander who conquered northern Africa and reached the Atlantic coast. There he stood and said: "O God, if this sea of darkness did not appear before me, I would convey Your Name, the source of light, to the remotest corners of the world."

Before his conversion, 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud took care of 'Uqba ibn Abi Mu'ayt's sheep. He was a weak, little man who everyone ignored. After becoming a Muslim, however, he was one of the most senior Companions. During his caliphate, 'Umar sent him to Kufa as a teacher. In the scholarly climate he

RANKING OF THE MOST IN

established there, the greatest figures of Islamic jurisprudence grew up, among them Alqama, Ibrahim al-Nakha'i, Hammad ibn Abi Sulayman, Sufyan al-Thawri, and especially Imam Abu Hanifa, the founder of the largest Islamic legal school.

Ikrima was the son of Abu Jahl, the harsh and inflexible leader of the Qurayshi unbelievers. Finally, after the Conquest of Makka, he converted to Islam. This event so changed him that he welcomed martyrdom 3 years later at the Battle of Yarmuk. His son, Amir, was martyred with him.

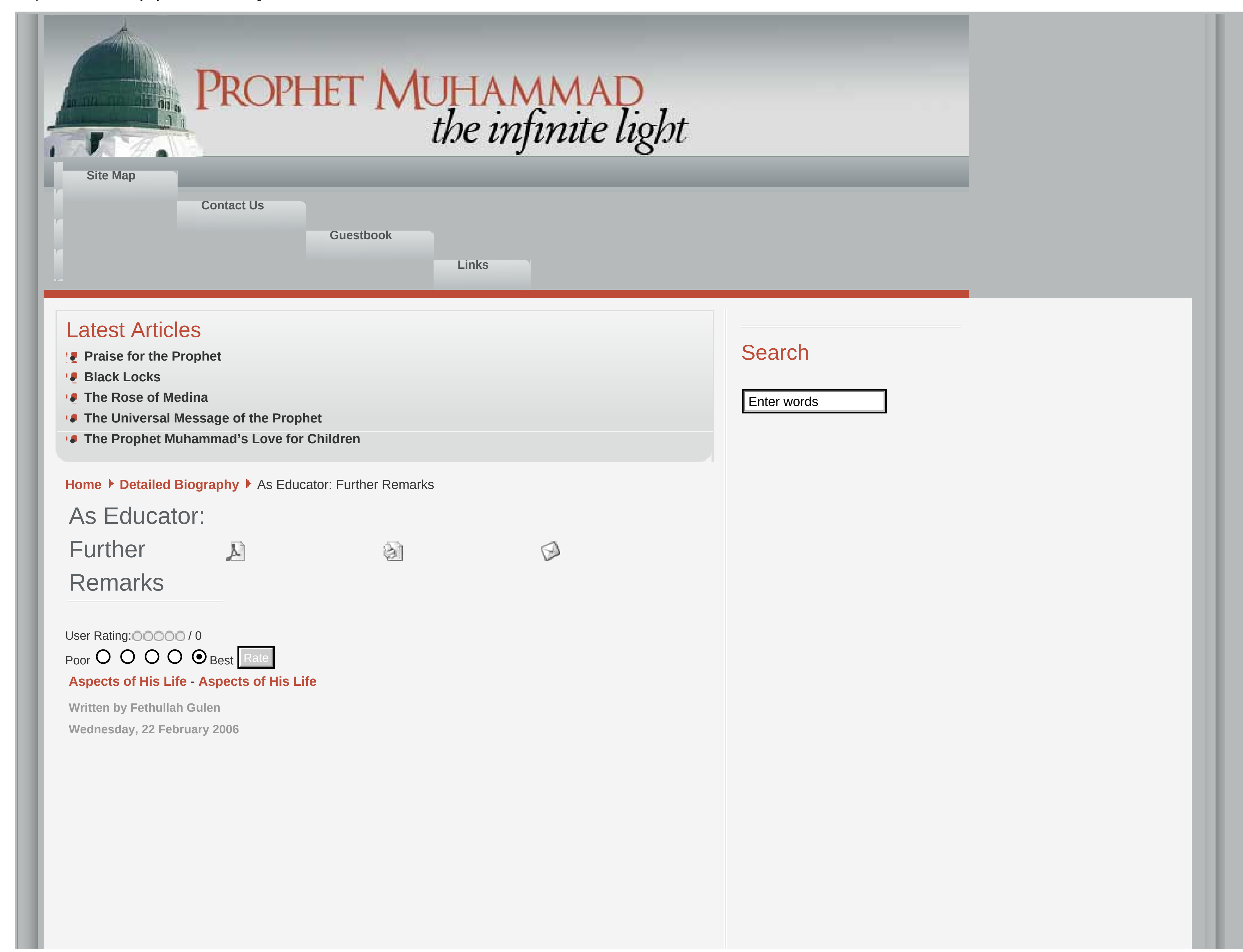
Hansa was one of the finest poetesses before Islam. Becoming a Muslim, she abandoned poetry because: "While we have the Qur'an, I cannot write poems." She lost her four sons at the Battle of Qadisiyya. This great woman, who had lamented her brother's death before the appearance of Islam with a great poem, did not lament this loss. Instead, she deepened her submission to God and said only: "O God, all praise be to You. You have bestowed on me while alive the possibility of offering you as martyrs my four sons that you gave me."

The school of Prophet Muhammad also produced the most just rulers in history. Besides Abu Bakr, 'Uthman, 'Ali and many others who succeeded them, 'Umar has been recognized in almost every age as one of the world's most just and greatest statesmen. He used to say: "If a sheep falls from a bridge even on the river Tigris and dies, God will call me to account for it on the Day of Judgment." When you compare the pagan 'Umar to the Muslim 'Umar, you easily see the sharp contrast between the two and understand how radically Islam changes people.

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As Educator: Further Remarks

Aspects of His Life - Aspects of His Life

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

Due to misconceptions and secular tendencies, especially in the West in recent centuries, most people define religion as blind faith, meaningless acts of worship, a consolation for life's problems. Such mistaken ideas have developed in Christendom partly due to Christianity's historical mistakes and shortcomings. Some secularized, worldly Muslims have compounded this mistake by reducing Islam to an ideology, a social, economic, and political system. They ignore one fact stated in the Qur'an, the Traditions, and throughout Islamic history: Islam, the middle way between all extremes, addresses itself to all human faculties and senses, as well as to each individual's mind, heart, and feelings, and encompasses every aspect of human life. That is why Prophet Muhammad stressed learning, trading, agriculture, action, and thought.

Moreover, he encouraged his people to do perfectly whatever they did, and condemned inaction and begging. For example, he said: "God loves a believing, skilful servant." The Qur'an declares: Say: "Work; and God will surely see your work, and the Messenger and the believers" (9:105). As all of our actions will be displayed on the Day of Judgment, we cannot be careless and do something half-heartedly just to get rid of it. Moreover, The Messenger declares: "When you do something, God likes you to do it perfectly." [1]

Islam encourages people to work, and considers our lawful attempts to earn our living and support our family to be acts of worship. Unlike medieval Christianity, it does not idealize (nor even advise) life as a hermit. It forbids dissipation and luxury on the grounds that if we live a self-indulgent life here and neglect our religious duties, our prosperity in both worlds will be in jeopardy. For example, in a concise saying that summarizes the essentials of a happy economic and social life and prosperity in both this world and the next, The Messenger declares:

When you are involved in speculative transactions, occupied only with animal-breeding, content with agriculture, and abandon striving in the way of God to preach His religion, God will subject you to such a humiliation. He will not remove it until you return to your religion. [2]

This hadith is extraordinarily apt in describing the pitiable condition of Muslims over the last few centuries. Speculative transactions signify the dying of a healthy economic life and the resort to unlawful, self-abandoned ways of earning one's living. Contentment with agriculture and animal breeding is the sign of laziness and abandoning scientific investigation—the Qur'an explicitly states that God created humanity as His vicegerent and entrusted us with knowledge of the names of things. This means that we are to establish science and exploit natural resources by discovering the Divine laws of nature and reflecting on natural phenomena. However, while doing this, we should seek God's good pleasure and practice Islam.

The Qur'an contains many verses, such as Say: "Are they equal—those who know and those who don't know?" (39:9), that emphasize the importance of knowledge and learning. It also warns that among His servants, only those who have knowledge truly fear God (35:28), meaning that true piety and worship is possible only through knowledge. Confining knowledge to religious sciences devoid of reflection and investigation inevitably results in contentment with animal breeding and agriculture, in idleness and the neglect of striving in the way of God. The ultimate result is misery, poverty, and humiliation.

The Messenger drew attention to this important fact in some other Traditions, such as: "An hour of reflection and contemplation is better than a year of (supererogatory) religious worship," and "A powerful believer is better and more lovable to God than a weak one." [3] Being powerful requires both spiritual and physical health as well as scientific and technical competence. Restricting the meaning of being powerful to physical strength shows one's total lack of understanding of what true power is based on.

In conclusion, being a good Muslim is possible only through being a good student in the school of Prophet

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This attitude was displayed by Ja'far ibn Abi Talib, the Prophet's cousin, who emigrated to Abyssinia to escape severe Qurayshi persecution. He once told the Negus, ruler of Abyssinia: "O king, we used to drink blood, eat carrion, fornicate, steal, kill each other, and plunder. The powerful used to oppress the weak. We used to do many other shameful and despicable things."

Prophet Muhammad set the best example for his people in belief, worship, and good conduct—in short, in all aspects of life. His people considered having daughters a source of shame, and so buried them alive. When the Prophet came with the Divine Message, women enjoyed their rights fully. Once a girl came to The Messenger and complained: "O Messenger of God, my father is trying to force me to marry my uncle's son. I don't want to marry him." The Messenger sent for her father and warned him not to do this. The man promised that he would not do so. The girl then stood up and said: "O Messenger of God, I didn't intend to oppose my father. I came here only to find out whether Islam allows a father to marry his daughter to somebody without her consent."

The Messenger warned his Companions not to beg. However poor and needy they were, the Companions did not beg from anybody. They were so sensitive in this matter that they even refrained from asking help. If, for example, one of them dropped his whip while on a mount, he would dismount and pick it up himself rather than ask someone to pick it up and hand it to him. [4]

Prior to Islam, people worshipped idols and did not give due respect to their parents. God's Message told them: Your Master has decreed that you shall not worship any but Him, and to be good to parents (17:23). This Divine decree changed them so radically that they began asking the Messenger if they would be punished if they did not return the looks of their parents' with a smile. The Qur'an ordered them not to usurp an orphan's property (17:34) and forbade theft. This made them so sensitive to others' rights that history does not record more than one or two thefts in that blessed period of the Prophet's rule.

Murder was extremely widespread in pre-Islamic Arabia. However, when the Prophet came with the prohibition: Slay not the soul God has forbidden (17:33), this evil was all but eradicated. The Messenger also forbade fornication. This ended all kinds of sexual immorality. However, we do find one incident of fornication during that period. It is as follows:

One day a pale and exhausted man came to The Messenger and exclaimed: "O Messenger of God, cleanse me!" The Messenger turned his face from him, but the man insisted, repeating his demand four times. At last, the Messenger asked: "Of what sin shall I cleanse you?" The man replied that he had fornicated. This sin weighed so heavily on his conscience that he desired to be punished. The Messenger asked those present: "Is he insane?" When told he was not, he told them to see if he was drunk. They examined him and found him sober. In the face of his insistent confession, The Messenger had to order the man to be punished. After it, he sat and wept.

A few days later, the man's partner appealed to The Messenger to cleanse her. Many times The Messenger turned away from her and sent her back. In utmost remorse, she insisted on being punished. The Messenger sent her back once more, saying: "You may be pregnant. Go and give birth to your child." The woman did so, and then returned with the same request. The Messenger excused her: "Go back, for perhaps your child needs feeding." After the child had been weaned, the woman came again. When someone reproved her while the punishment was being carried out, the Prophet frowned at him and said: "By God, this woman repented of her sin so much that if her repentance were shared out among all the people of Madina, it would be enough to cover them with forgiveness also."

Quote

“. He solves and expounds the strange riddle of the mystery of the world's creation; he discovers and solves the abstruse talisman which is the mystery of the universe; and he provides convincing and satisfying answers to the three awesome and difficult questions that are asked of al1 beings and have always bewildered and occupied minds: "Where do you come from? What are you doing here? Where are you going?"”

-Bediuzzaman Said Nursi

Prophet Muhammad established such a magnificent system and formed such an excellent community that not even a Plato, a Thomas Moore, a Campanella, or any other utopian has been able to imagine its equal. Among thousands of other examples, the following illustrates this fact.

Abu Hurayra, one of the poorest Companions, once came to The Messenger. He had not eaten anything for some days. An Ansari by the name of Abu Talha took him home to give him some food. But there was no other food in his house except some soup that his wife had made for the children. She asked her husband what she should do, and they decided upon the following: They would put their children to bed without feeding them. As the soup was too little to satisfy all of them, only the guest should have it. While they were sitting at the table and getting ready to eat, Abu Talha's wife would knock the candle over, extinguishing it apparently by mistake. In the resulting darkness, they would act as if they were eating, although Abu Hurayra would be the only one eating. This is what they did. Abu Hurayra ate until he was satisfied, and then left, unaware of what had really happened.

The following day, they went to pray the morning prayer in the mosque. At the end of the prayer, the Messenger turned to them and asked: "What did you do last night, that caused this verse to be revealed in praise of you: They prefer others above themselves, even though poverty be their portion. (59:9)?"

[1] Muttaqi al-Hindi, Kanz al-'Ummal, 3:907.
[2] Abu Dawud, "Buyu'," 54; Ibn Hanbal, Musnad, 2:84.
[3] Muslim, "Qadar," 34; Ibn Ma'ja, "Muqaddima," 10; Ibn Hanbal, 3:366.
[4] Muslim, "Zakat," 108; Ibn Ma'ja, "Jihad," 41.

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Jihad

Aspects of His Life - Aspects of His Life

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

Jihad has the literal meaning of exerting our best and greatest effort to achieve something. It is not the equivalent of war, for which the Arabic word is qital. Jihad has a much wider connotation and embraces every kind of striving in God's cause. A mujahid is one who is sincerely devoted to his or her cause; who uses all physical, intellectual, and spiritual resources to serve it; who confront any power that stands in its way; and, when necessary, dies for this cause. Jihad in the way of God is our struggle to win God's good pleasure, to establish His religion's supremacy, and to make His Word prevail.

A related principle, that of enjoining good and forbidding evil (amr bi al-ma'ruf wa nahy 'an al-munkar) seeks to convey the message of Islam and establish a model Islamic community. The Qur'an introduces the Islamic community as a model community required to inform humanity of Islam and of how the Prophet lived it: Thus We have made you a community justly balanced, that you might be witnesses for all humanity, and the Messenger may be a witness for you (2:143).

The greater and lesser jihad. There are two aspects of jihad. One is fighting to overcome carnal desires and evil inclinations—the greater jihad. The other is encouraging others to achieve the same objective—the lesser jihad.

The Muslim army was returning to Madina after they had defeated the enemy in a battle, when the Messenger of God said to them: "We are returning from the lesser jihad to the greater one." When the Companions asked what the greater jihad was, he explained that it was fighting with the carnal self.

The aim of either jihad is that the believer be purified of sins and so attain true humanity. The prophets were sent for this purpose. God says in the Qur'an:

Thus We have sent unto you a Messenger from among you, who recites unto you Our revelations (and makes Our signs known to you), and who purifies you and instructs you in the Book and in the Wisdom, and also instructs you in what you don't know. (2:151)

Human beings are in some sense like raw minerals to be worked upon by Prophets, who purify and refine them by removing the seal from their hearts and ears, by lifting the veils from their eyes. Enlightened by the Prophets' message, people can understand the meaning of the laws of nature, which are signs of God's Existence and Unity, and can penetrate into the subtle reality behind things and events. Only through the guidance of Prophets can we attain the high status expected of us by God.

In addition to teaching the signs, Prophets also instructed their people in the Book and in Wisdom. As the Qur'an was the last Revelation to the Last Prophet, God means the Qur'an when He speaks of the Book, and the Sunna when He speaks of Wisdom. We must therefore follow the Qur'an and the Prophet's Sunna if we desire to be rightly guided.

The Prophet also teaches us what we do not know, and so humanity will continue to learn from the Prophet until the Day of Judgment. We learn from him how to purify ourselves of sin. By following his way, many great saints have attained their distinctions as saints. Among them, 'Ali says that his belief in the pillars of Islam is so firm that even if the veil of the Unseen were lifted, his certainty would not increase. 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani is said to have had insight into the mysteries of the seventh heaven. These and many others, such as Fudayl bin 'Iyaz, Ibrahim bin Adham, and Bishr al-Khafi might well have been endowed with Prophethood, if God had not already set a seal on Prophethood.

The dark clouds of ignorance have been removed from our intellectual horizon through the guidance of Prophet Muhammad, and many more advances will be made in science and technology as a result of the light he brought from God.

Jihad is the legacy of the Prophets, and Prophethood is the mission of elevating men to God's favor by purifying them. Jihad is the name given to this prophetic mission, which has the same meaning as bearing witness to the truth. Just as judges listen to witnesses to settle a case, so those who have performed jihad have borne witness to God's Existence and Unity of God by striving in His way. The Qur'an says: God bears witness that there is no god but He and so do the angels and the people of learning, maintaining justice. There is no god save He, the All-Mighty, the Wise (3:18). Those who have performed jihad will also bear witness to the same truth in the heavenly court, where the case of unbelievers will be settled.

Those who bear witness to God Existence and Unity the remotest parts of the world and preach this truth. This was the duty of the Prophets as stated in the Qur'an, and it should be our duty as well:

Quote

"He must be called the Saviour of Humanity. I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it much needed peace and happiness."
-The Genuine Islam, Singapore, Vol.

...Messengers who brought good news to humanity and who admonished them, so that they might have no argument against God after their coming. God is the All-Mighty and the All-Wise. God Himself bears witness by what He has revealed to you that it has been revealed with His knowledge; and so do the angels. There is no better witness than God. (4:165–66)

God has sent a Prophet to every people, so that every people can have an idea of Prophethood. As the term used to describe the activity of Prophethood, jihad is deeply engraved on the heart of every believer so that he or she feels a profound responsibility for preaching the truth in order to guide others to the Straight Path.

The lesser jihad, usually taken to mean fighting in God's cause, does not refer only to military struggle. The term is comprehensive, for it includes every action done for God's sake. Whether speaking or keeping silent, smiling or making a sour face, joining or leaving a meeting, every action taken to ameliorate the lot of humanity, whether by individuals or communities, is included in its meaning.

While the lesser jihad depends on mobilizing all material facilities and is performed in the outer world, the greater jihad means a person's fighting against his or her carnal soul. These two forms of jihad cannot be separated from each other.

The Messenger of God has taught us how to perform both forms of the jihad. He has established the principles of preaching the truth, which have application until the Day of Judgment. When we scrutinize the way he acted, we shall see that he was very systematic. This is actually another proof of his Prophethood and a wonderful example of following the way of God in behavior.

The believers kept their belief vigorous and active by means of jihad. Just as a tree keeps its leaves as long as it yields fruits, so believers can preserve their vigor as long as they perform jihad. Whenever you encounter a hopeless pessimist, you soon realize that he or she is one who has abandoned jihad. Such people have been deprived of the spirit, and are sunk in pessimism because they have abandoned preaching the truth. Whoever performs jihad unceasingly does not lose his or her enthusiasm and always tries to increase the scope of his or her activities. Every good deed results in a new one, so that believers never become deprived of a good: As for those who strive for us We surely guide them to our path. God is with the good (29:69).

There are as many paths leading to the Straight Path as the number of breaths drawn in creation. Whoever strives for His cause is guided, by God, to one of these paths and is save from going astray. Whoever is guided to His Straight Path by God lives a balanced life. They neither exceed the limits in their human needs and activities or in their worship and other religious observances. Such balance is the sign of true guidance.

All sacrifices made in fighting oppressive unbelievers, no matter how great, only constitute the lesser jihad of striving to discharge religious obligations as perfectly as possible. The greater jihad is much harder to accomplish, since it requires us to fight against our own destructive drives and impulses, such as arrogance, vindictiveness, jealousy, selfishness, self-conceit, and the carnal desires.

Although the person who abandons the lesser jihad is liable to spiritual deterioration, he or she may recover. Everything in the universe praises and glorifies God with each breath and is, accordingly, a sign of God's Existence and Unity. A person may be guided to the Straight Path through one of these signs. For this reason, it is said that there are as many paths leading to the Straight Path of God as the breaths of all

1, No. 8, 1936

His creatures. A person returning from the lesser jihad is vulnerable to worldly weaknesses. Pride, love of comfort and ease may captivate that person. Thus the Prophet warned us through his Companions by saying, while returning to Madina after a victory: "We are returning from the lesser jihad to the greater."

The Companions of the Prophet were fearless on the battlefields, and as sincere and humble as dervishes in worshipping God. Those victorious warriors used to spend most of their nights praying to God. Once, when night fell during battle, two of them took turns in standing guard. One rested while the other prayed. Having become aware of the situation, the enemy shot a shower of arrows at him. He was hit and bled profusely, but did not abandon his prayer. When he finished his devotions, he woke his friend, who asked him in amazement why he had not done so sooner. He replied: "I was reciting Surat al-Kahf, and I did not wish the deep pleasure I found in this prayer to be interrupted."

The Companions went into a trance-like state of ecstasy when in prayer, and would recite the Qur'an as if it were being revealed directly to them. Thus, they did not feel the pain caused by arrows which penetrated their bodies. Jihad, in its lesser and greater aspects, found complete expression in them.

The Prophet combined these two aspects of jihad in the most perfect way in his own person. He displayed monumental courage on the battlefields. 'Ali, one of the most courageous figures of Islam, confesses that the Companions took shelter behind the Prophet at the most critical moments of fighting. To give an example, when the Muslim army experienced a reverse and began to scatter in the first phase of the Battle of Hunayn, the Prophet urged his horse toward the enemy lines and shouted to his retreating soldiers: "I am a Prophet, I do not lie! I am the grandson of 'Abd al-Muttalib, I do not lie!"

Jihad's stages and main principles. The first Revelation to The Messenger was the command: Read! This command, coming at a time when there was nothing readily available to read, meant that believers should use their intellectual and spiritual faculties to discern God's acts in the universe and His laws related to its creation and operation. Through such discernment, believers seek to purify themselves and their minds of all ignorance-based superstitions and to acquire true knowledge through observation and contemplation.

We are not composed only of our minds. God has endowed us with many faculties, each of which needs satisfaction. So while feeding our minds with the Divine signs in the universe, we seek to cleanse our hearts of sin. We live a balanced life in awareness of Divine supervision, and continuously seek His forgiveness. In this way, we eventually conquer our desire for forbidden things and, through prayer, ask God to enable us to do good deeds.

Thus Read! signifies action. For The Messenger, who already was absolutely pure in spirit and devoid of superstition, it meant that it was time to start his mission as a Messenger of God. He was to recite the Revelation in public and instruct people about His signs. By doing this, he would purify their minds of superstitions carried over from the Age of Ignorance, and their hearts of sin. He would enlighten them, intellectually and spiritually, by instructing them in the Revealed Book of God (the Qur'an) and His Created Book (the universe): We have sent among you, of yourselves, a Messenger who recites Our signs to you, purifies you, and instructs you in the Book and in the Wisdom, and also instructs you in what you don't know (2:151).

After he received this first revelation, The Messenger returned home in great agitation. He was sleeping wrapped in a cloak, enwrapped by his people's suffering and this heavy responsibility, when God commanded him: O enwrapped one, keep vigil the night long, save a little (a half of it, or diminish or add a little), and chant the Qur'an in measure, for We shall charge you with a weighty word (73:1-5).

The short period between the first revelation and the spreading of the Message, a period marked by such verses as those mentioned above, was a preliminary stage for The Messenger. He had to prepare himself to convey the Qur'an by keeping long night vigils and reciting the Qur'an in measure.

In addition to conveying the Message, jihad, as discussed above, entails the believers' struggles with their carnal selves to build a genuine spiritual character, one overflowing with belief and inflamed with love. These two dimensions of jihad continue until the believer dies (the individual sphere) and until the Last Day (the collective sphere). Therefore, soon after this verse was revealed, The Messenger received the following revelation: O enshrouded one, arise and warn! Magnify your Master, purify your robes, and flee defilement! Do not show favor, seeking worldly gain! For the sake of your Master, be patient! (74:1-7).

These revelations ordered the Prophet to begin preaching Islam. He started with his family members and nearest relatives and, after Warn your tribe of nearest kindred (26:214) was revealed, spread this call throughout his tribe. His subsequent public preaching was met with derision, threats, torture, enticing bribes if he would stop, and boycott.

In Makka, The Messenger never resorted to or allowed retaliation. Islam came not to spread trouble or cause dissention, but, in the words of Amir ibn Rabi', to bring people out of the darkness of unbelief into the light of belief, to free them from serving that which is not God so that they can serve the One True God, and to elevate them from the pits of the Earth to the heights of Heaven.

As Islam literally means peace, salvation, and submission, it obviously came to establish peace. This is established first in our inner worlds, so that we are at peace with God and natural environment, and then throughout the world and the universe. Peace and order are fundamental in Islam, which seeks to spread in a peaceful personal and collective atmosphere. It refrains from resorting to force as much as possible, never approves of injustice, and forbids bloodshed: Whoever kills someone, other than in retaliation for murder or corruption on the Earth, in effect has killed humanity; whoever saves a life in effect has saved humanity (5:32).

Coming to eradicate injustice and corruption, and to "unite" the Earth with the Heavens in peace and harmony, Islam calls people with wisdom and fair exhortation. It does not resort to force until the defenders of their corrupt order, which is rooted in injustice, oppression, self-interest, exploitation, and usurpation of others' rights, seek to prevent its preaching in peaceful ways and to suppress it. Thus, force is allowed in the following cases:

• If unbelievers, polytheists, or those who cause trouble and corruption actively resist the preaching of Islam and prevent others from listening to its message. As Islam is a Divine religion seeking to secure human well-being and happiness in both worlds, it has the right to present itself. If this is not allowed, theoretically, its opponents are given three alternatives: accept Islam, allow its preaching in peaceful ways, or admit its rule. If they reject these alternatives, force is allowed.

However, there is an important point to mention. In order to use force, there must be an Islamic state. It was allowed only after the Prophet emigrated to Madina and established an independent state, for the Muslims had been wronged. The verses revealed to give this permission explain the Islamic view of just war:

(Fighting is) permitted to those who are fought against, because they have been wronged. God is able to give them victory. Those who have been driven from their homes unjustly only because they said: "Our Master is God." For had it not been for God's repelling some people by means of others, cloisters and

churches and synagogues and mosques, wherein the Name of God is much mentioned, would have been pulled down. God helps one who helps Him [His religion]. God is All-Strong, All-Mighty. Those who, if We give them power in the land, establish worship and pay zakat and enjoin the good and forbid the evil. And God's is the sequel of events. (22:39-41)

It is clear from these verses and from history that Islam resorts to force only to defend itself and establish freedom of belief. Under Muslim rule, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, Hindus, and adherents of other religions are free to practice their religion. Even many Western historians and writers have agreed that Christians and Jews experienced the most prosperous and happiest period of their history under Muslim rule.

• Islam, being the true religion revealed by God, never approves of injustice. As declared in: We have written (decreed) in the Psalms after the Torah (and remind once more in the Qur'an) that My righteous servants will inherit the Earth. (21:105), God's righteous servants must submit the Earth to His rule, which depends on absolute justice and worship of the One God. They also are obliged to strive until persecution, as well as any worship of and obedience to false deities and unjust tyrants, is ended. Thus Muslims are to fight for the feeble and oppressed:

How should you not fight for the cause of God and of the feeble and oppressed men and women and children, who cry: "Our Master! Bring us out of this town whose people are oppressors! Give us from Your presence some protecting friend! Give us from Your presence some defender!" (4:75)

Some rules. As believers cannot transgress God's limits, they must observe His rules related to fighting. Some are deduced direct from the Qur'an and Sunna, and are as follows:

• A believer is one from whom God has bought his or her life and wealth in exchange for Paradise (9:111). They are dedicated solely to His cause and seek only His good pleasure. Therefore, whoever fights for other causes (e.g., fame, wealth, racial or ideological considerations) is excluded from God's good pleasure.

• Fight in the way of God against those who fight you, but do not transgress. God does not love transgressors (2:190). Believers are told not to fight neutral parties, and to reject unscrupulous methods or indiscriminate killing and pillage, which characterize all wars waged by non-Muslims. The excesses alluded to consist of, but are not limited to, fighting women and children, the old and the injured, mutilating enemy corpses, destroying fields and livestock, and other acts of injustice and brutality. Force is to be used only when unavoidable, and only to the extent absolutely necessary.

• When fighting cannot be avoided, the Qur'an tells believers not to avoid it. Rather, they must prepare themselves, both morally and spiritually, and take precautions. These are:

- Strive for that spiritual stage when 20 Muslims can overcome 200 of the enemy: O Prophet! Exhort the believers to fight. Twenty steadfast men shall overcome 200; 100 hundred steadfast men shall overcome 1,000 unbelievers, because unbelievers have no understanding or sound judgment (8:65), and when those who will meet their Master exclaim: How often a small company has overcome a mighty host by God's leave! God is with the steadfast (2:249).

To attain such a rank, Muslims must have an unshakable belief and trust in God and avoid all sins as much as possible. Belief and piety or righteousness are two unbreakable weapons, two sources of inexhaustible power: Don't faint or grieve, for you shall gain the upper hand if you are true believers (3:139), and The

sequel is for the righteous people (7:128).

- In addition to moral strength, believers must equip themselves with the latest weaponry. Force is vital to obtaining the desired result, so believers cannot ignore it. Rather, they must be further advanced in science and technology than unbelievers so that the latter cannot use their superiority for their own selfish benefit. As Islam states that "right is might," believers must be able to prevent unbelievers and oppressors from showing that "might makes right": Make ready for them all you can of armed force and tethered horses, that thereby you may dismay the enemy of God and your enemy, and others beside them whom you don't know; God knows them. Whatever you spend in the way of God will be repaid to you in full, and you will not be wronged (8:60).

An Islamic state should be powerful enough to deter the attacks of unbelievers and oppressors, as well as their plans to subject weaker people. It should be able to secure peace and justice, and to prevent any other power from causing trouble or corruption. This will be possible when Muslims equip themselves with strong belief and righteousness, and with scientific knowledge and the latest technology. They must combine science and technology with faith and good morals, and then use this force for the good of humanity. Belief in God calls for serving people. Greater belief means a greater concern for the created's welfare. When Muslims attain this rank, God will not allow unbelievers to defeat believers (4:141). Otherwise, what the Prophet predicted will happen: "(The forces of unbelief) will unite to make a concerted attack upon you. They will snatch the morsel out of your mouths and pillage your table."

- When fighting is necessary, Muslims must report for duty, for:

O you who believe! What ails you that when you are told: "Go forth in the way of God," you sink down heavily to the ground? Are you so content with the life of the world, rather than the world to come? Yet the enjoyment of the life of the world, compared with the world to come, is a little thing. If you don't go forth, He will afflict you with a painful doom. He will replace you with another people; and you will not hurt Him. God is powerful over everything. (9:38-39)

God loves those who battle for His cause in ranks, as if they were a solid structure. (61:4)

O you who believe! Shall I show you something that will save you from a painful doom? You should believe in God and His Messenger, and strive for the cause of God with your wealth and your lives. That is better for you, if you only knew. He will forgive your sins and admit you into Gardens underneath which rivers flow, and to dwelling places goodly in Gardens of Eden. That is the mighty triumph; and other things you love, help from God, and a nigh victory. Give good tidings to believers. (61:10–13)

- A community is structured and functions like a body, for it demands a "head" having "intellect." Therefore, obedience to the head is vital for communal prosperity. When The Messenger was raised in Arabia, people resembled a broken rosary's scattered beads and were unaware of the need for obedience and the benefits of collective life. The Messenger inculcated in them the feeling of obedience to God, His Messenger, and their superiors, and used Islam as an unbreakable rope to unite them:

O you who believe! Obey God, the Messenger, and those of you who are in authority. If you have a dispute concerning anything, refer it to God and the Messenger if you believe in God and the Last Day. That is better and more seemly in the end. (4:59)

O you who believe! When you meet an army, hold firm and remember and mention God much, so that you may be successful. Obey God and His Messenger, and don't dispute with each other lest you falter and

your strength departs. Be steadfast, and God is with the steadfast. (8:45–46)

The Companions' consciousness of obedience made many previously impossible things possible. For example, when he appointed the 18-year-old son of his emancipated (black) slave as commander of an army containing many elders, among them Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthman, no Companion objected. In another case, during a military expedition the commander ordered his soldiers to throw themselves into a fire. Even though this was not an Islamic order, some tried to obey it. However, others prevented them from committing suicide and persuaded them to ask The Messenger whether they had to obey such un-Islamic orders. Although it is unlawful to obey sinful orders, obedience to law is vitally important to a community's collective life, particularly if it wants to win a war.

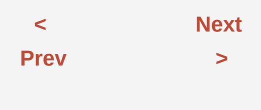
- Believers must remain steadfast and are forbidden to flee the battlefield:

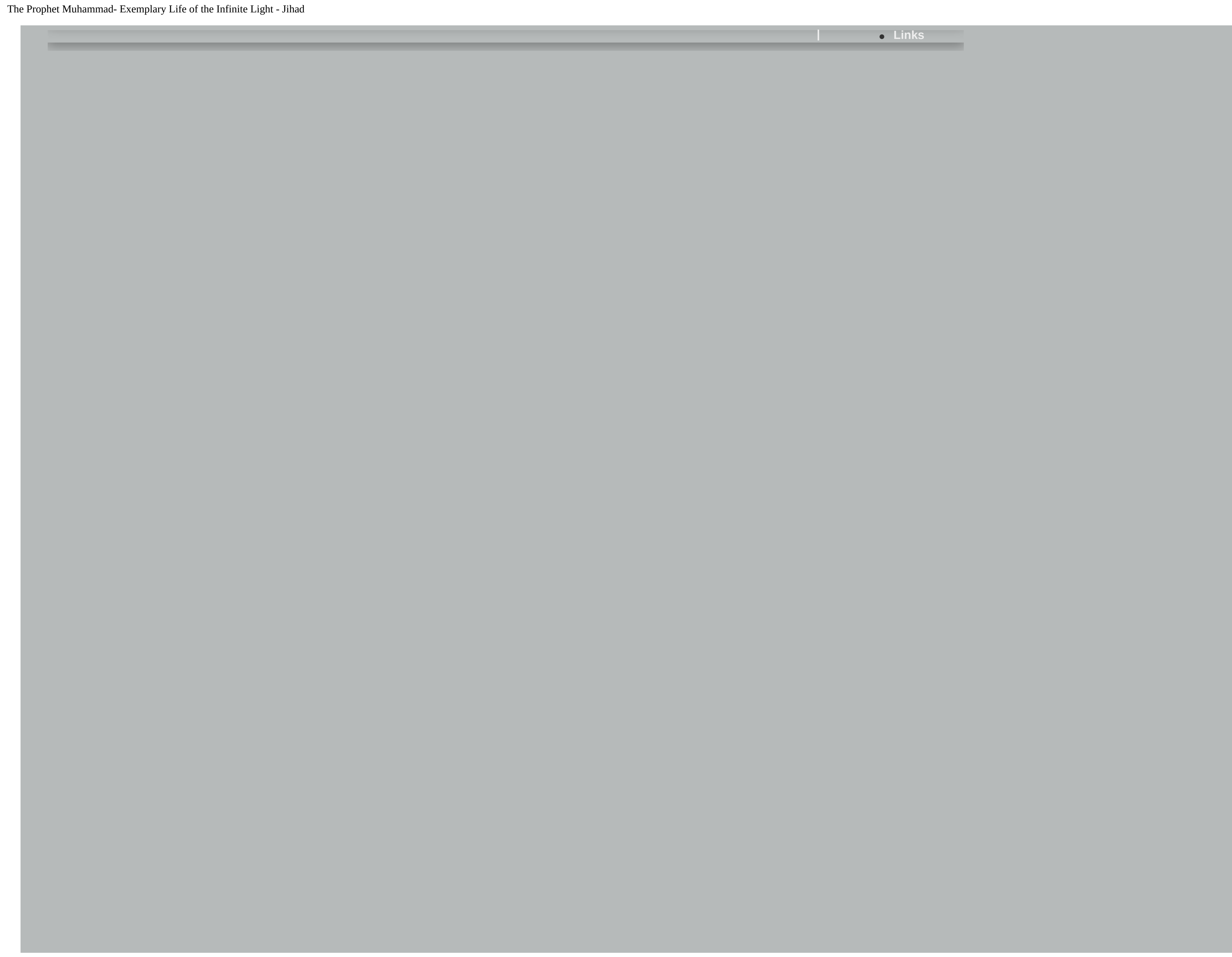
O you who believe! When you meet unbelievers in battle, don't turn your backs to them. Whoever does so on that day, unless maneuvering for battle or intending to join a company, has incurred God's wrath, and his habitation will be Hell—an evil homecoming! (8:15-16)

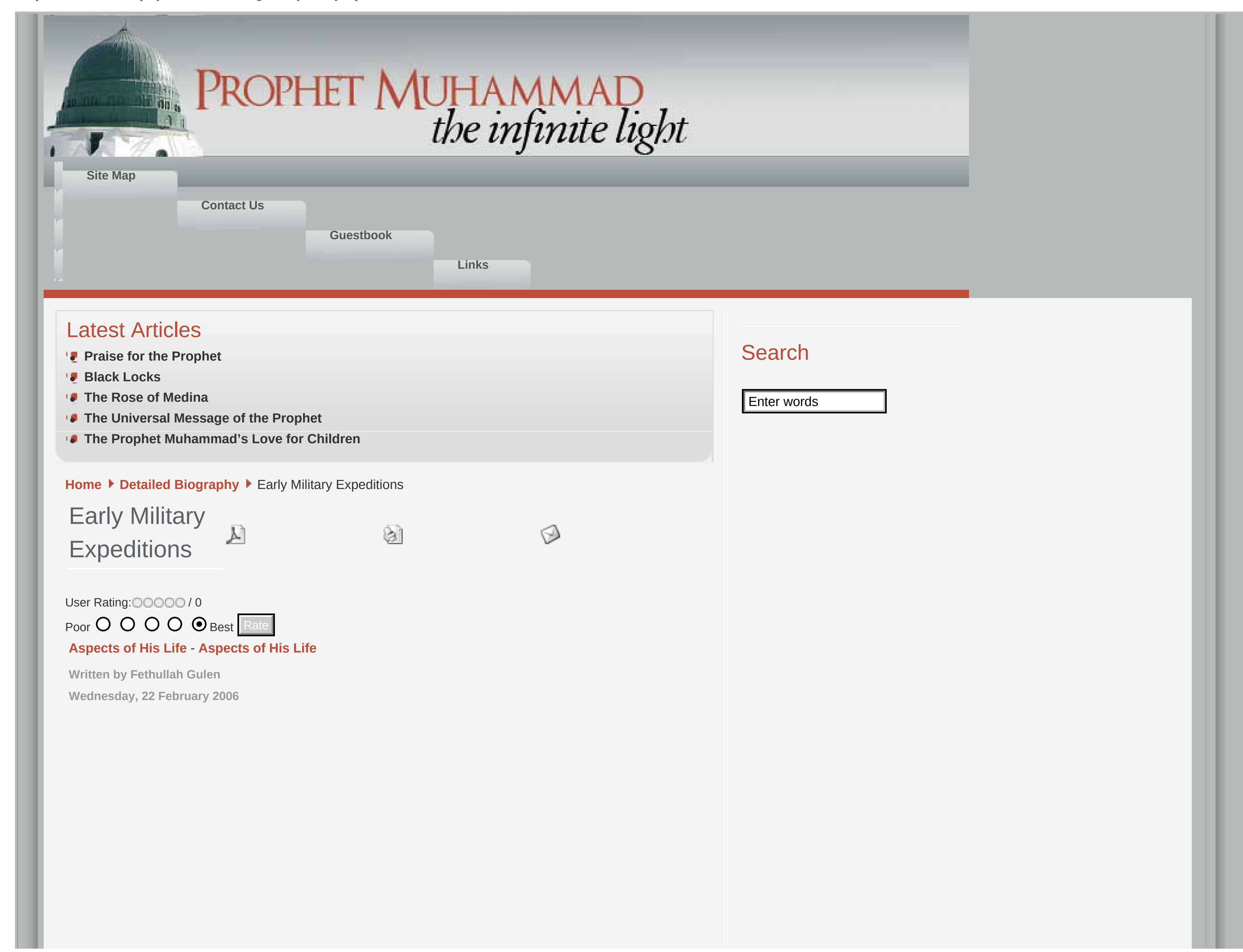
Fleeing the battlefield is one of the seven major sins, for it causes disorder in the ranks and demoralizes the others. Their belief in God and the Hereafter cannot be firm, for their actions show they prefer this life to the Hereafter. Believers may leave the battlefield only to maneuver, as a tactic, or to join another company.

In the Battle of Yarmuk (636 CE), 20,000 valiant Muslims fought—and defeated—200,000 Byzantines. Qabbas ibn Ashyam, one of the heroes, realized that he had lost a leg (around noon) only when he dismounted from his horse hours later. His grandson later introduced himself to Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, saying: "O Caliph, I am the grandson of the one who lost his leg at noon but became aware of it only toward evening."

During the Battle of Mu'ta (629 CE), the Muslim army consisted of 3,000 soldiers; the opposing Byzantine forces had about 100,000 soldiers. The Muslims fought heroically, and both armies retreated at the same time. Despite this, the Muslims thought that they had fled the battlefield and so were ashamed to meet The Messenger. However, he welcomed and consoled them: "You didn't flee; you retreated to join me. You will collect strength and fight with them again." It happened just as he said, for just before his death the Muslim army raided southern Syria; 2 years later, the Muslims dealt the Byzantines a deadly blow at Yarmuk.




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Early Military Expeditions

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Aspects of His Life - **Aspects of His Life**

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

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With the arrival of The Messenger in Madina, the struggle between Islam and unbelief entered a new phase. In Makka the Prophet had devoted himself almost exclusively to expounding Islam's basic principles and to his Companions' moral and spiritual training. After the Emigration (622 CE), however, new Muslims belonging to different tribes and regions began to gather in Madina. Although the Muslims held only a tiny piece of land, the Quraysh allied itself with as many tribes as possible to exterminate them.

In these circumstances, the small Muslim community's success, not to mention its very survival, depended upon several factors. In order of importance, there were:

• Propagate Islam efficiently and effectively to convert others.

• Demonstrate the unbelievers' falsehoods so convincingly that nobody could doubt Islam's truth.

• Face exile, pervasive hostility and opposition, economic hardship, hunger, insecurity, and danger with patience and fortitude.

• Regain their wealth and goods usurped by the Makkans after they emigrated.

• Resist, with courage and force of arms, any assault launched to frustrate their movement. While resisting, they should ignore the enemy's numerical or material superiority.

In addition to threats from Makka and its allies, the young community had to contend with Madina's three Jewish tribes, which controlled Madina's economic life. Although they had been waiting for a Prophet, they opposed The Messenger because he was not Jewish. One of the first things the Messenger did in Madina was to sign a pact with the Jews. Despite this, the Jews continued to harbor considerable ill-will toward the Messenger and plot against him and Islam. For example, the skilled Jewish poet Ka'b ibn Ashraf composed poems satirizing The Messenger and instigating his enemies.

In Madina, another hostile element began to emerge: hypocrisy. The Hypocrites can be divided into four broad groups, as follows:

• Those who had no faith in Islam but entered the Muslim community to cause trouble within its ranks.

• Those who understood political realities and so sought some advantage by seeming to convert. However, they maintained contacts with anti-Islamic forces in the hope that they could benefit from contacts with both sides and thus not be harmed.

• Those who had not made up their minds yet, but seemed to have converted because those around them were doing so.

• Those who accepted Islam as the true religion but found it difficult to abandon their inherited way of life, superstitions, and customs, as well as to exercise the self-discipline required by Islam.

Military expeditions. In such severe circumstances, The Messenger decided to dispatch military expeditions into the desert's heart. He had several goals in mind, some of which were as follows:

• Unbelievers tried to extinguish the Light of God with their mouth, but, although they were averse, God

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willed to perfect His Light (61:8). The Messenger wanted to prove that unbelievers could not exterminate Islam, and to show that Islam could not be ignored.

• Makka enjoyed a central position in Arabia. As the peninsula's most formidable power, all other tribes felt some sort of adherence to it. By sending military expeditions to neighboring areas, The Messenger wanted to display Islam's power and break the Quraysh's dominance. Throughout history, the concept of "might is right" has usually been a norm, for "right" is often too weak to rule. In Arabia, the Quraysh had might and wealth, and so neighboring tribes obeyed them. Islam came to make right prevail, and so The Messenger had to break Makka's grip.

• His Mission was not restricted to a fixed period or nation, for he was sent as a mercy for all the worlds. Thus he was charged with conveying Islam as far as possible. To succeed, he had to know what was going on in the peninsula. These expeditions served as vanguards providing him with the information he needed to pave the way for the preaching of Islam.

• One of the most effective ways to crush your enemies is to drive them to unpremeditated, premature actions, for this allows you to retain the initiative. The Messenger surely was informed of the Quraysh's contacts with 'Abd Allah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul, leader of Madina's Hypocrites. He also was alert to their possible attacks on Madina. After a Qurayshi military force entered Madina's suburbs and the returned to Makka with its plunder, The Messenger dispatched military expeditions to encourage the Quraysh to act before thinking. He then could thwart their plots.

• The Quraysh lived on trade with the international markets in Syria and Yemen, and so had to secure their trade routes. But now that the Muslims were in Madina, these routes could be threatened. While strengthening his position, the Prophet also was dispatching military expeditions to paralyze the Quraysh's hopes and plans of defeating him.

• Islam's commandments seek to guarantee security of life and property, chastity and belief, as well as physical, mental, and spiritual health. Given this, murder and theft, robbery and plundering, usurpation and interest (or usury), gambling, alcohol, illicit sexual relations, anarchy, and the propagation of atheism are forbidden. The Arabic word for belief, iman, means giving security. Thus a mu'min (believer) never cheats, and all are safe from a believer's tongue and hand. Believers do not lie, break their promise, or betray a trust. Also, they do not earn their livelihood through stealing, usurpation, and interest-based transactions. In addition, they seek to harm no one, for they are convinced that those who kill even one person are like those who kill humanity.

When The Messenger was raised as a Prophet, Arabia had no security of life or property, chastity, health, or belief. One of his tasks, therefore, was to establish absolute security in every aspect of life. Once he said to Adiy ibn Khatam: "A day will come when a woman will travel, riding in a litter, from Hira to Makka and fear nothing except God and wolves." [1] By dispatching military expeditions, The Messenger sought to establish security therein and show everyone that only Islam would bring them security.

Expeditions. The first post-Emigration military expedition, led by Hamza, was sent toward Sif al-Bahr. It arrived just as a Qurayshi trade caravan was returning from Damascus. The Quraysh had usurped all the Emigrants' possessions and traded them in Damascus. The Messenger used this situation to display Muslim power and directly threaten Quraysh's economic well-being. No clash took place in this first confrontation, but the desert tribes witnessing the incident were inclined to acknowledge another source of power in the peninsula.

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“It is impossible for anyone who studies the life and character of the great Prophet of Arabia, who knows how he taught and how he lived, to feel anything but reverence for that mighty Prophet, one of the great messengers of the Supreme. And although in what I put to you I shall say many things which may be familiar to many, yet I myself feel whenever I re-read them, a new way of admiration, a new sense of reverence for that mighty Arabian teacher.”
-Annie Besant, THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF MUHAMMAD,

This expedition was followed by another one commanded by 'Ubayda ibn Harith. With the same purpose in mind, 'Ubayda went as far as Rabigh, a valley on the way to Makka. The 60 Muslim cavalrymen encountered a Qurayshi force of 200 armed men. An exchange of arrows took place and, fearing defeat, the Makkan force eventually withdrew toward Makka. [2]

Military expeditions, some led by The Messenger, now followed one another. In two of the expeditions he commanded, The Messenger went to Abwa and Buwat, respectively, with the intention of threatening Qurayshi trade caravans and intimidating the Quraysh. [3] In Abwa, he concluded a treaty with the Banu Damra tribe: neither side would fight the other, and Banu Damra would not aid the Muslims' enemies.

Shortly before the Battle of Badr (624 CE), The Messenger sent an expedition of about 10 people, commanded by 'Abd Allah ibn Jahsh, to Nakhla, located a few miles from Makka on the way to Ta'if. He told them to follow the Quraysh's movements and gather information about their plans. While they were in Nakhla, a Qurayshi trade caravan coming from Ta'if halted there. Something happened unexpectedly, and the Muslims killed one Makkan and captured the rest (except one) and their belongings. These were taken to Madina.

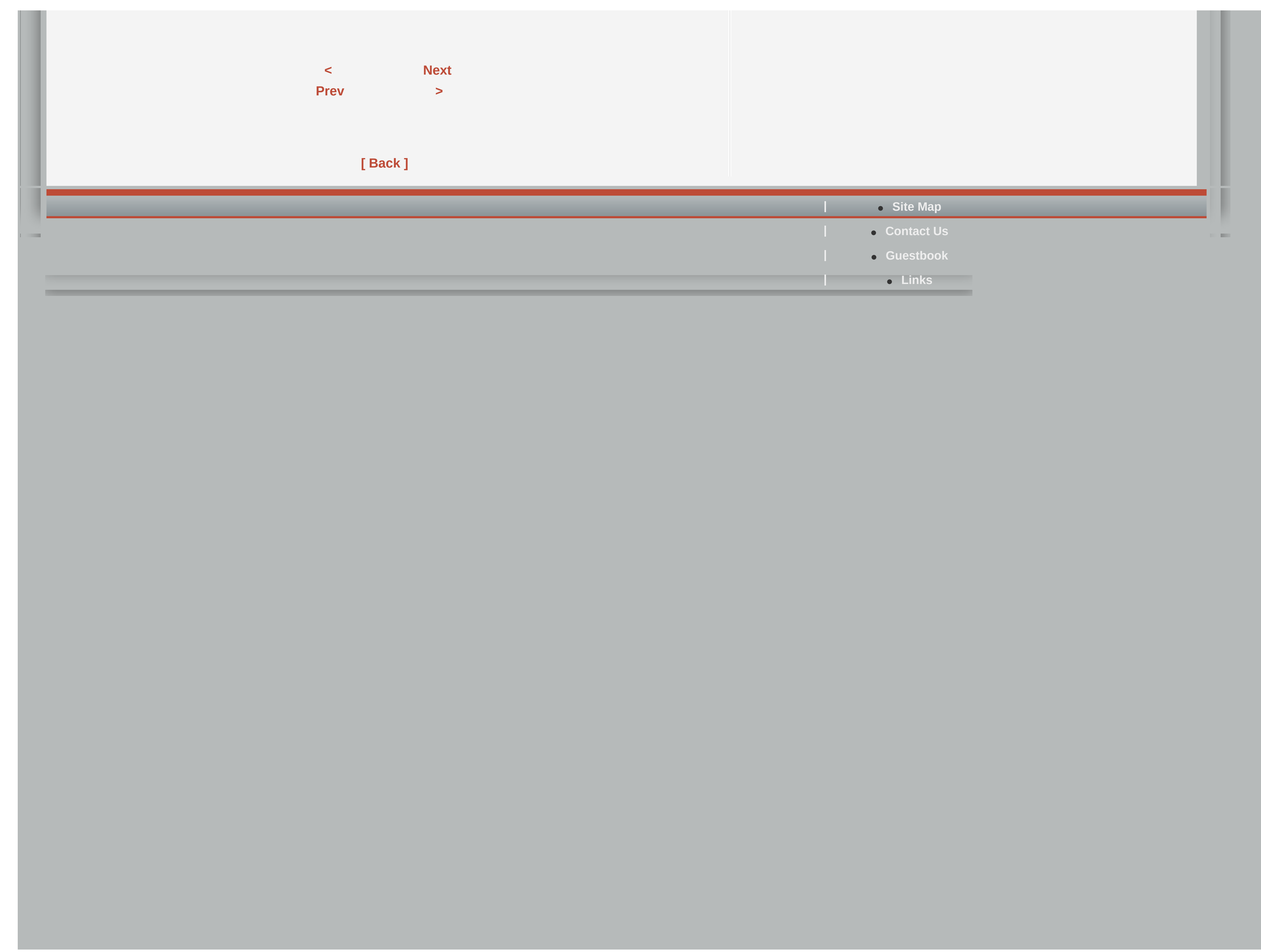
This event occurred toward the end of Rajab and the beginning of Sha'ban. Therefore, it was uncertain whether the sanctity of Rajab, one of the four holy months, had been violated. The Quraysh, those Jews secretly allied with them, and the Hypocrites made full use of this possible violation in their anti-Muslim propaganda campaign. They claimed that the Muslims shed blood in a sacred month, a time when doing so is prohibited.

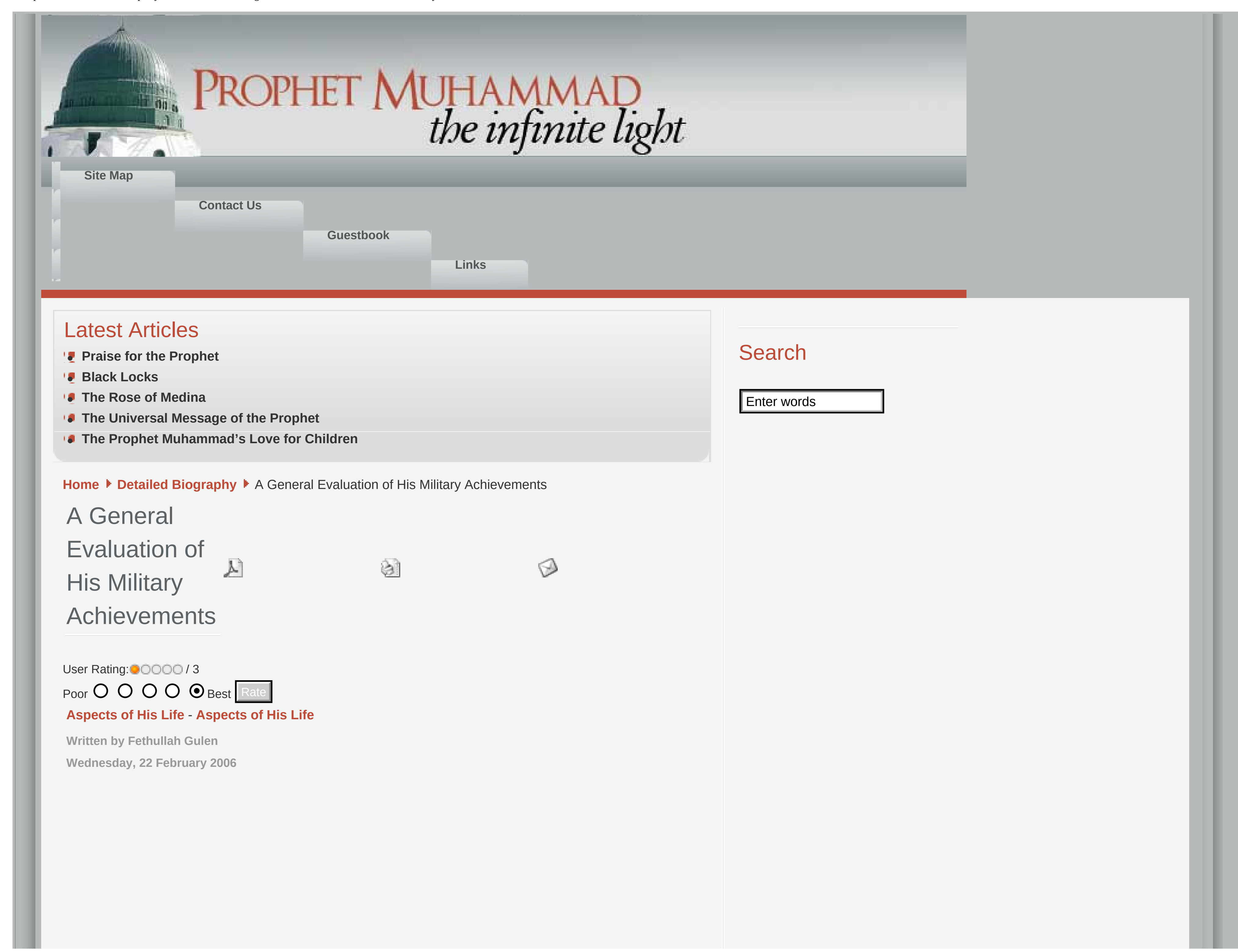
Since the incident had taken place without his approval, The Messenger explained to its participants that he had not ordered them to fight. Other Muslims also reproached them. However, a Revelation consoled them on account of their pure intention with hope for God's mercy:

They question you concerning the holy month, and fighting in it. Say: "Fighting in it is a heinous thing, but to bar from God's way, and unbelief in Him, denying entry into the Holy Mosque, expelling its people from it are more heinous in God's sight. Persecution is more heinous than killing." They will not cease to fight with you till they turn you from your religion, if they are able; and whoever of you turns from their religion and dies unbelieving—their works have failed in this world and the next. Those are the inhabitants of the Fire; therein they shall dwell forever. But the believers, and those who emigrate and struggle in God's way—those have hope of God's Mercy. God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate. (2:217–18) [4]

The verses answered the objections of the anti-Muslim forces. In short, fighting during the holy months is an evil act. However, those who had subjected the believers to continual and indescribable wrong for 13 years merely because they believed in the One God had no right or justification to raise such an objection. Not only had they driven the Muslims from their homes, they had placed the Holy Mosque beyond their reach, a punishment unknown in the Ka'ba's approximately 2,000-year known history. With such a record, who were they to raise such an outcry over a small incident, especially one that had taken place without the Prophet's approval?

[1] Bukhari, "Manaqib," 25.
[2] Ibn Hisham, Sira, 2:241; Ibn Sa'd, Tabaqat, 2:7.
[3] Ibn Hisham, 2:241, 248.
[4] Ibn Hisham, 2:252.


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A General Evaluation of His Military Achievements

Aspects of His Life - Aspects of His Life

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

A significant point concerning the Messenger is that he was the most eminent commander in human history. To understand this dimension of his sacred mission, consider these following points:

• No other Prophet carried his mission to decisive victory in all aspects of life. Moses, who most resembles the Messenger, died while his people were still in the desert and unable to conquer Palestine after several decades of preaching. Jesus' mission sought mainly to infuse a spiritual and moral revival among the Jews, who were drowning in materialism. After his elevation to Heaven, his disciples conveyed his message to Rome, despite severe persecution. Unfortunately, the price to be paid was the degeneration of Jesus' original creed.

When Prophet Muhammad died, he left behind a Muslim Arabia and dedicated Companions ready to convey Islam throughout the world. He achieved this end with a handful of self-sacrificing people who previously had not heard of belief or Scripture, and who had known nothing of civilized social life, world politics, good morals, and self-discipline. He transformed desert tribes engaged in civil wars and unending feuds, and equipped them with belief, sincerity, knowledge, good morals, love of humanity, compassion, and activism. They dedicated themselves to a Divine cause, and the result was an army of light. Rabi' ibn Amir, Muslim envoy to the Persian commander during the War of Qadisiya, said the Prophet

…elevates people from the dark pits of worldly life to the high, boundless realm of the spirit; from the humiliation of worshipping false and human-made divinities to the honor and dignity of worshipping One God, the only Creator and Sustainer of the universe; and frees them from the oppression and depression brought about by false religions and human systems to the luminous and peaceful climate of Islam."

• The Messenger never sought a worldly kingdom; he was sent to guide humanity to salvation in both worlds. His goal was to revive people, not to kill them. To achieve this, however, he had to arrange military expeditions and sometimes command armies. He sent out about 80 such expeditions, and actually commanded 28 of them. Fighting took place in almost half of these campaigns, and only around 1,000 people died: approximately 250 Muslims were martyred, and 750 non-Muslims were killed. He established Islam, brought absolute security to Arabia for the first time, and opened the way to global security at the cost of only 1,000 lives. This is, as so many of his other achievements are, unequalled in world history.

• The Messenger was the first to legislate an international law. Although the concept was known before Islam, international law was very limited. For example, there were no recognized rules concerning prisoners of war. The Messenger established a set of rules to bring a "discipline" to fighting. For example, the following is the order given by him and all his true successors to departing armies, an order obeyed to the letter by Muslims in their wars as Muslims:

Always keep fear of God in your mind. Remember that you can't afford to do anything without His grace. Don't forget that Islam is a mission of peace and love. Don't destroy fruit trees or fertile fields in your paths. Be just, and spare the feelings of the vanquished. Respect all religious persons who live in hermitages or convents, and spare their edifices. Don't kill civilians, or violate women's chastity and the conquered's honor. Don't harm old people and children, or accept gifts from the civilian population. Don't billet your soldiers or officers in civilians' homes. [1]

• The Messenger always took preliminary precautions and left nothing to chance. He always acted with great care, insight, and forethought, and so never met with any setbacks. He had no part in the reverse suffered at Uhud. Also, he was extraordinarily successful in getting information from the enemy without resorting to force or torture. For example, some Muslim soldiers who had captured an enemy soldier tried to force information out of him about the enemy's numbers and equipment. The Messenger ordered his

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release and asked him how many camels his army slaughtered every day. Calculating how many camels are eaten by how many people in a day, he tried to work out how many soldiers were coming toward him.

• The Messenger established a military intelligence service to provide him with all necessary information about the enemy. No news of his own movements, however, was ever leaked. Before setting out to conquer Makka, Khatib ibn Abi Balta'a secretly sent a letter with a woman to his relatives in Makka about the preparations. However, the Prophet was informed of this and sent 'Ali and Zubayr to intercept her, which they did.

Also, the Messenger kept his military preparations and ultimate destination a secret. He tended to march in one direction, and then turn toward his real destination later on. His tactics were characterized by speed, surprise attack, and flexibility. In most of his campaigns, he caught the enemy unprepared and overcame them relatively easily. For example, in the Battle of Khaybar, the Jews learned of his approach only because their farmers were abandoning their fields after seeing him in the early morning. They only had time to shelter in their citadels. When he marched upon Makka, his advance planning was so perfect that the Makkan poytheists surrendered unconditionally.

• Being a Prophet who brought a universal religion from God, the Messenger taught it so effectively that his Companions were always ready to sacrifice themselves. This was one of the main factors lying behind his victories. His Companions placed all of their reliance and confidence in him. Therefore, he inculcated fear in enemies' hearts, as he himself said: "I am supported by God through implanting fear in the hearts of my enemies from a distance of a month's walk." [2] He used psychology to demoralize his enemies. Poets like Hassan ibn Thabit and 'Abd Allah ibn Rawaha wrote or recited verses to demoralize the enemy. While performing the minor pilgrimage one year after the treaty of Hudaybiya, he ordered his Companions to run around the Ka'ba to demonstrate their strength to the Makkans watching from the neighboring hills. While running, 'Abd Allah ibn Rawaha recited:

I start with the name of God,
Apart from Whom there is no other god,
And Muhammad is the Messenger of God.
O unbelievers, and sons of unbelievers, clear out of his way.

The Messenger was pleased with his recitation, and said: "His words are more penetrating to the Quraysh than arrows." [3]

• The Messenger introduced new strategies and shattered the unity of allied enemy tribes. During the Battle of the Trench, the Jewish Banu Qurayza broke their treaty with the Muslims at a most critical moment and joined the Qurayshi siege. Left between two hostile camps, the Messenger offered peace to the Banu Ghatafan, a Qurayshi ally. This discouraged the Banu Ghatafan from continuing the war. He also engendered disagreement and mutual mistrust between the Quraysh and the Banu Qurayza. During the campaign of Khaybar, he pretended to march upon the Banu Ghatafan, allies of the Jews of Khaybar. Thus this tribe remained inactive and did not help the Jews.

• The Messenger did what he had to do, without hesitation or irresolution, at each step of his life. He never retreated or gave up hope during a battle. He stood steadfast during the critical moments of Uhud and Hunayn. He called to his scattering Companions: "Do not scatter! I am Muhammad, the Messenger of God. That is no lie!" When the Jewish tribes in and around Madina refused to honor their agreements, the Messenger marched upon them immediately. He did the same thing against the Banu Qurayza after the Battle of the Trench, without even stopping to take off his coat of mail, and against the Qurayshi army a

Quote

“His readiness to undergo persecutions for his beliefs, the high moral character of the men who believed in him and looked up to him as leader, and the greatness of his ultimate achievement - all argue his fundamental integrity. To suppose Muhammad an impostor raises more problems than it solves. Moreover, none of the great figures of history is so poorly appreciated in the West as Muhammad.”
-W. Montgomery Watt, MOHAMMAD AT MECCA, Oxford, 195

day after the setback at Uhud. Such incidents are very significant in showing his resolution and invincibility.

• In almost every campaign, the Messenger took the initiative to attack and direct the battle. Even in set battles, like those of Badr, Uhud, and the Trench, he kept the initiative. His use of surprise strategies and effective tactics defeated the enemy. He also used time and any opportunity most effectively.

• The Messenger usually changed his battle tactics and strategy. For example, during Badr he launched an overall attack after demoralizing the enemy in single combat. In the first stage of Uhud, he rendered the enemy cavalry inactive through archers stationed in the Aynayn mountain pass. Hurling such eminent warriors as Hamza, 'Ali, Abu Dujana, and Zubayr upon the enemy, he won the victory in the first stage of the battle. As for the Trench, he faced the enemy with a long, deep trench around Madina and, remaining within the city's confines, forced the enemy to retreat after a 4-week siege.

• The Messenger was never short of necessary reinforcements or logistics, and always kept his lines of communication open. He brought up, along with such extraordinary statesmen as Abu Bakr and 'Umar and people of profound scholarship and spirituality, great soldiers and invincible commanders. His education was based on three basic elements:

• Continuous physical training. He urged his Companions to train in archery, wrestling, swimming, and riding horses. Sometimes arranged competitions and footraces, in which he himself occasionally participated. He also stressed the need to preserve one's health and strength.

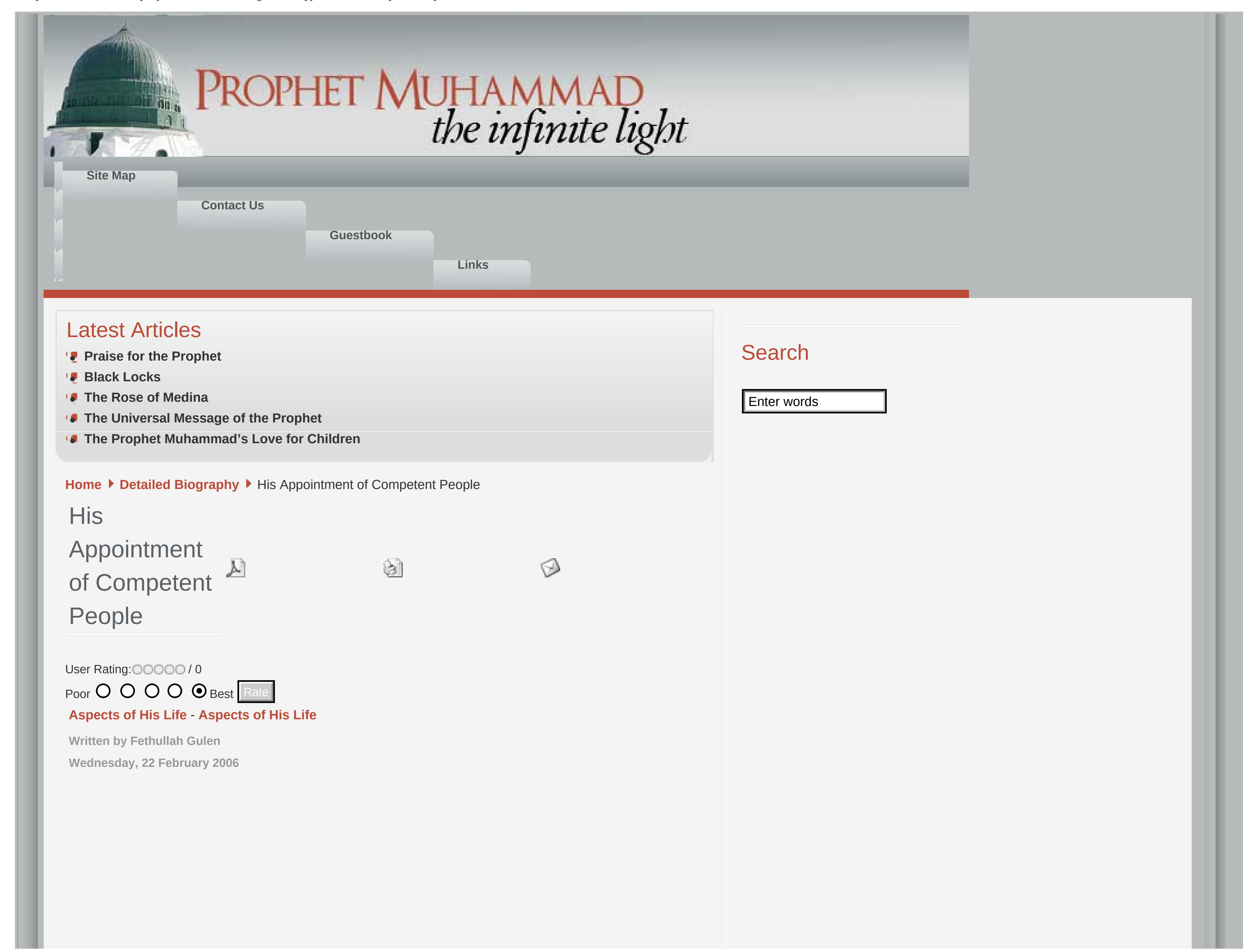
• Good morals and being well-mannered.

• Devotion to God with unshakable belief, submission, and reliance, and obedience to God, himself, and others in authority.

The Muslim army conveyed peace and security to the lands it conquered. Each soldier was absolutely dedicated to Islam. The only criterion for them to judge between people was belief in God. They did not feel true love for anybody who opposed God and His Messenger, even if they were their parents, children, or siblings (58:22). As a result, sometimes family members faced each other on the battlefield.

Belief and submission made the Muslim soldiers so powerful and fearless that neither the numerical strength of the enemy nor fear of death could prevent them from conveying the Divine Message. 'Abd Allah ibn Hudafa al-Sahmi, captured by the Byzantines, was told by a Christian priest that his life would be spared if he converted. He was given 3 minutes to decide. 'Abd Allah replied: "Thank you, father. You have given me 3 minutes to tell you about Islam."

[1] Andrew Miller, Church History, 285; Bukhari, "Manaqib," 9.
[2] Bukhari, "Tayammum," 1, "Salat," 56.
[3] Nasa'i, Sunan, 5:212; Ibn Hisham, 4:13; Ibn Sa'd, 2:121.



His Appointment of Competent People

Aspects of His Life - Aspects of His Life

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

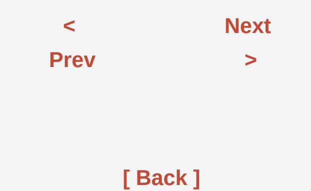
The Messenger appointed promising and competent Muslims to the work they could do best. He felt no need to change any appointment, for the person proved, through personal uprightness and competence, that he or she was the proper choice.

The Makkan period of Islam was inscribed in the Muslim community's memory as a time of unbearable persecution and torture. Abuse was not meted out only to the poor and unprotected Musims (i.e., 'Ammar, Bilal, and Suhayb), but also to powerful Muslim members of the Qurayshi elite (i.e., Abu Bakr and 'Umar). [1] To protect his followers, the Messenger permitted those who were poor and unprotected to emigrate to Abyssinia. But he kept the powerful ones (i.e., 'Ali, Zubayr, Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas) in Makka, for Islam needed their support to spread and implant itself in Makka. These powerful Muslims went on to occupy the highest administrative positions of the Muslim state.

Abu Dharr was a poor, blunt, and upright bedouin who never restrained his faith or his feelings. When he heard Muhammad's declaration of Prophethood, he came to Makka and converted. The Messenger used to preach Islam secretly in the earliest stage of his Prophethood. Abu Dharr was very pious and austere. However, since public administration requires special skills, the Messenger did not accept his request for an administrative post, saying: "You cannot manage the people's affairs. Don't apply for such jobs, for we don't assign such jobs to those who apply for them." [2]

The Messenger refused Abu Dharr, but implied the caliphates of Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthman. Holding the hands of Abu Bakr and 'Umar, he said: "I have four viziers, two in the heavens and two in the world. Those in the heavens are Gabriel and Michael; as for those in the world, they are Abu Bakr and 'Umar." [3] Concerning the caliphate of 'Uthman, he declared: "It will be a trial for him." [4]

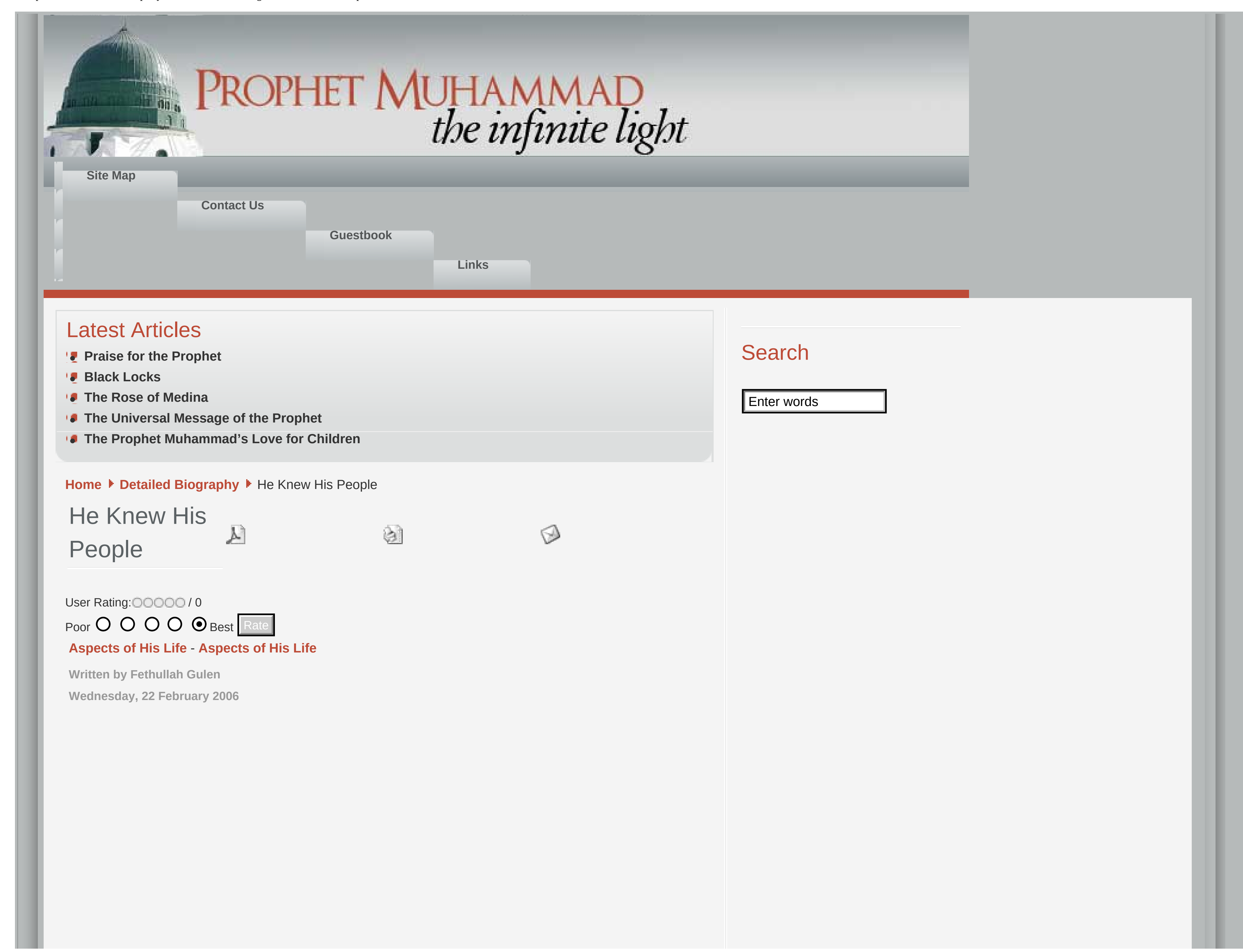
[1] Ibn Kathir, al-Bidaya, 3:40–1, 102–3; Ibn Hisham, Sira, 1:234.
[2] Muslim, "'Imara," 16–7.
[3] Muttaqi al-Hindi, Kanz al-'Ummal, 11:563, 13:15.
[4] Bukhari, "Fada'il al-Ashab," 5:7; Muslim, "Fada'il al-Sahaba," 29.



Quote

"Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, unveiled the transitory nature of this world and death, and showed the grave to be a waiting room opening onto the realm of eternal happiness. He led every heart seeking happiness, regardless of place or time, to the fountain of Khadr, and enabled them to drink the elixir of immortality."
-Fethullah Gulen

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He Knew His People

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Aspects of His Life - **Aspects of His Life**

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

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The Messenger knew his people more than they knew themselves. Like Abu Dharr, 'Amr ibn 'Abatha was a bedouin. He came to Makka and, meeting the Messenger, asked rudely: "What are you?" The Messenger replied very gently: "A Prophet of God." Such gentleness caused 'Amr to kneel down and declare: "I will follow you from now on, O Messenger." The Messenger did not want 'Amr to stay in Makka, for he would be unable to endure the torments inflicted upon the believers. So he told him: "Return to your tribe, and preach Islam among them. When you hear that I am victorious, come and join us."

Years later, 'Amr came to Madina's mosque and asked the Messenger: "Do you recognize me, O Messenger?" The Messenger, who had an extraordinarily strong and keen memory (another dimension of his Prophethood) answered promptly: "Aren't you the one who came to me in Makka? I sent you back to your tribe and told you to join us when you heard that I was victorious." [1]

I mentioned the case of Julaybib earlier. After the moral lesson of the Messenger, Julaybib became an honest, chaste young man. Upon the Messenger's request, a noble family gave him their daughter in marriage. Shortly afterwards, Julaybib took part in a battle and, after killing 7 enemy soldiers, was martyred. When his corpse was brought to the Messenger, he put his head on Julaybib's knees and said: "O God, this one is of me, and I am of him." [2] He had discovered Julaybib's essential virtue and foreseen his future service for Islam.

The conquest of Khaybar was an occasion for the Messenger to demonstrate his unique ability to recognize each Muslim's potential, skills, and shortcomings. When the siege was prolonged, he declared: "Tomorrow I will hand the standard to one who loves God and His Messenger and is loved by them." [3] This was a great honor, and all Companions earnestly hoped for it. He gave it to 'Ali, despite his youth, because of his great military and leadership skills. He took the standard and conquered the formidable stronghold of Khaybar.

Whoever the Messenger gave a job to performed it successfully. For example, he described Khalid ibn Walid as "a sword of God"; [4] Khalid was never defeated. Besides such great soldiers and invincible commanders as Qa'qa'a, Hamza, and Sa'd, the Messenger made 'Usama ibn Zayd commander over a great army containing such leading Muslims as Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, Talha, and Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas. 'Usama was the approximately 17-year-old son of Zayd, the Messenger's black emancipated slave. His father had commanded the Muslim army at Mu'ta against the Byzantines, and was martyred.

The Messenger was 25 when he married Khadija bint Khuwaylid, a widow 15 years his senior. He did not marry another woman until her death in the tenth year of his Prophethood. All of his subsequent marriages, after the age of 53, were directly related to his mission. One important reason for this was that each wife had a different character and temperament, and so could convey to other Muslim women Islam's rules for women. Each one served as a guide and teacher for womanhood. Even such leading figures in subsequent generations as Masruq, Tawus ibn Kaysan, and Ata' ibn Rabah benefited considerably from them. The science of hadith is especially indebted to 'A'isha, who related more than 5,000 Traditions from the Messenger and was a great jurist.

Subsequent events proved how wise and apt were the Messenger's the choices, not least in the matter of marriage.

[1] Muslim, "Musafirin," 294; Ibn Hanbal, Musnad, 4:112.
[2] Muslim, "Fada'il al-Sahaba," 131.

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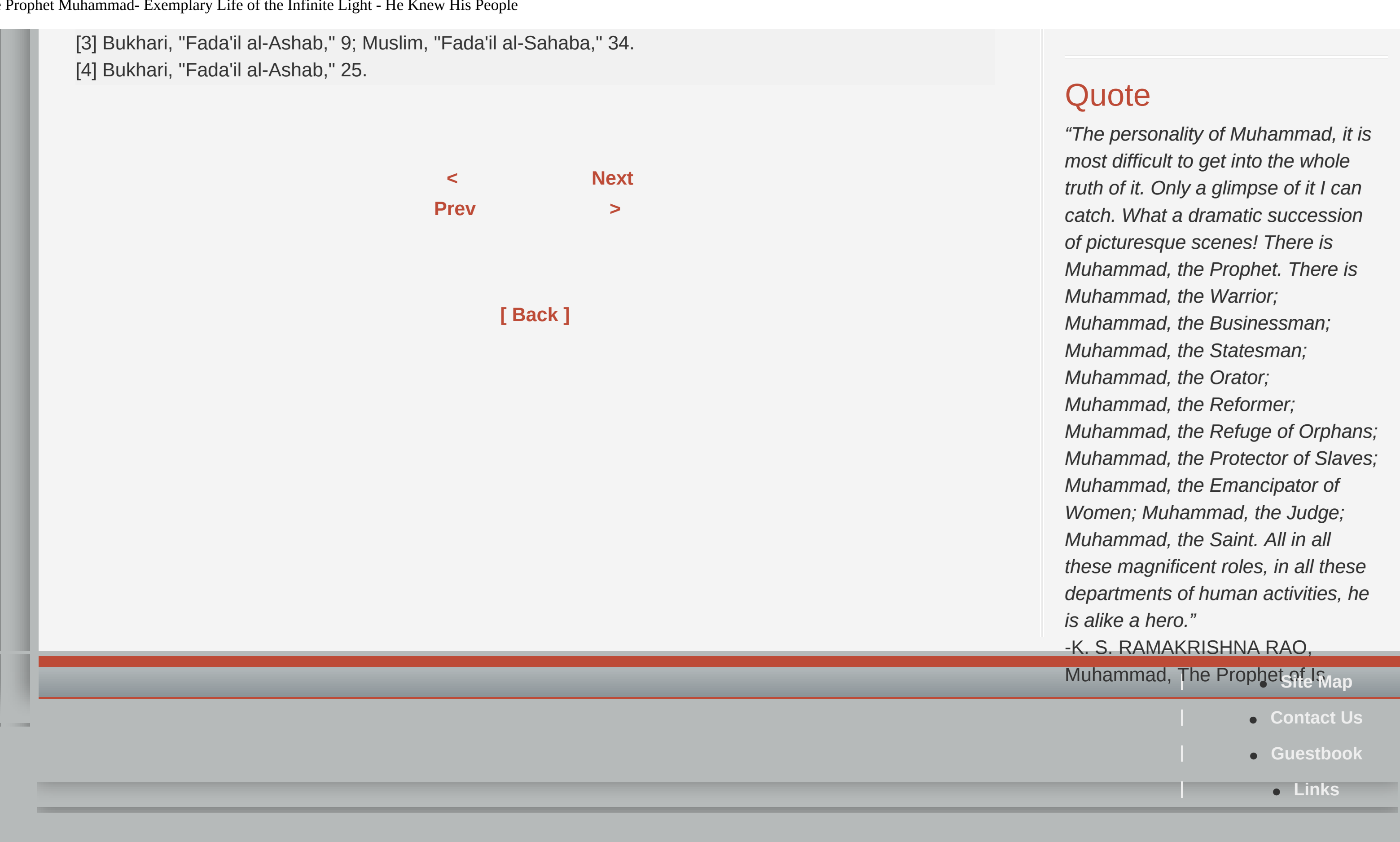
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[3] Bukhari, "Fada'il al-Ashab," 9; Muslim, "Fada'il al-Sahaba," 34.
[4] Bukhari, "Fada'il al-Ashab," 25.

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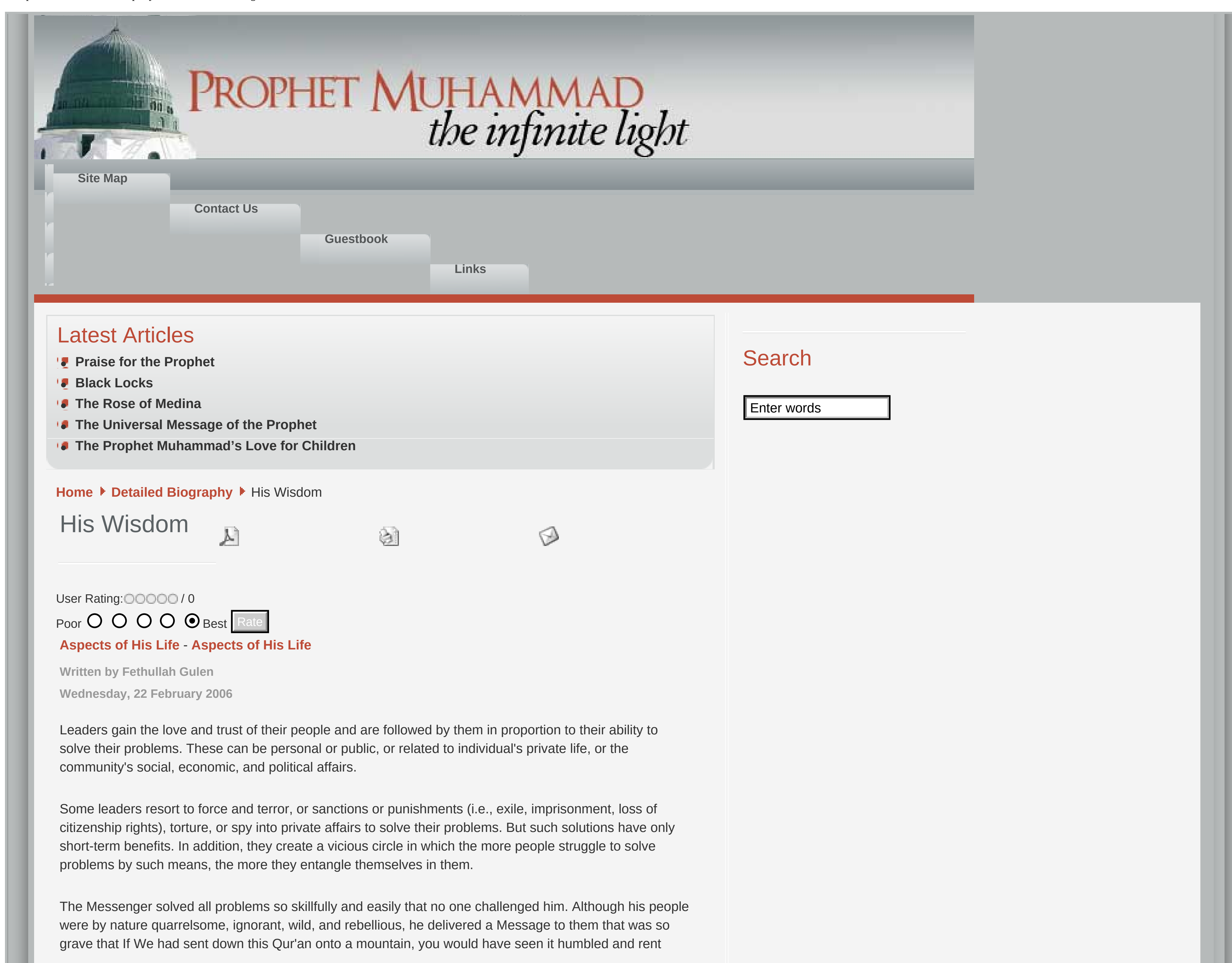
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Quote

"The personality of Muhammad, it is most difficult to get into the whole truth of it. Only a glimpse of it I can catch. What a dramatic succession of picturesque scenes! There is Muhammad, the Prophet. There is Muhammad, the Warrior; Muhammad, the Businessman; Muhammad, the Statesman; Muhammad, the Orator; Muhammad, the Reformer; Muhammad, the Refuge of Orphans; Muhammad, the Protector of Slaves; Muhammad, the Emancipator of Women; Muhammad, the Judge; Muhammad, the Saint. All in all these magnificent roles, in all these departments of human activities, he is alike a hero."

-K. S. RAMAKRISHNA RAO, Muhammad, The Prophet of Is

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His Wisdom

Aspects of His Life - Aspects of His Life

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

Leaders gain the love and trust of their people and are followed by them in proportion to their ability to solve their problems. These can be personal or public, or related to individual's private life, or the community's social, economic, and political affairs.

Some leaders resort to force and terror, or sanctions or punishments (i.e., exile, imprisonment, loss of citizenship rights), torture, or spy into private affairs to solve their problems. But such solutions have only short-term benefits. In addition, they create a vicious circle in which the more people struggle to solve problems by such means, the more they entangle themselves in them.

The Messenger solved all problems so skillfully and easily that no one challenged him. Although his people were by nature quarrelsome, ignorant, wild, and rebellious, he delivered a Message to them that was so grave that If We had sent down this Qur'an onto a mountain, you would have seen it humbled and rent

asunder out of fear of God (59:21). He transformed them into a harmonious community of peace, happiness, knowledge, and good morals. Reflect closely upon the utopias imagined in the West, such as The Republic (Plato), Utopia (Thomas Moore), and Civitas Solis (T. Campanella), and you will see that, in essence, they dreamed of Madina during the time of Prophet Muhammad. Humanity has never witnessed the equal of that society.

In the first volume, we described how he prevented an imminent clan war among the Quraysh while repairing the Ka'ba, [1] and how he prevented a possible disaster after the Battle of Hunayn. [2] In addition, he skillfully solved an impending Emigrant—Ansar conflict while returning from fighting the Banu Mustaliq. When an internal clash nearly broke out when the army halted by a well, the Messenger immediately gave the order to march.

[1] Each clan claimed the honor of reinserting the sacred Black Stone in its place. Requested by the tribe to solve this problem, the future Prophet of Islam spread his mantle on a piece of cloth on the ground and, putting the Black Stone on it, invited the chiefs of the four major clans entrusted with repairing the Ka'ba to each take one corner of the cloth. When they raised the Black Stone to the spot where it was to be inserted, he took it and inserted it firmly in itsposition. (I think it will be better to publish this book in one volume, and therefore refer such information (as given in footnotes 3, 4 and the like) to the pages where they are told.
[2] Some Ansar were not happy with the way the Prophet divided the spoils after this battle, which occurred soon after Makka was conquered. The Prophet gave large amounts of booty to the new Makkan Muslims to strengthen their faith. To avoid a communal split, he called the Ansar together and reminded them of what he had bought them, how they had received him, and that he would always be with them. When he asked them if they still wanted the booty, they answered in unison that all they wanted was for him to stay with them.



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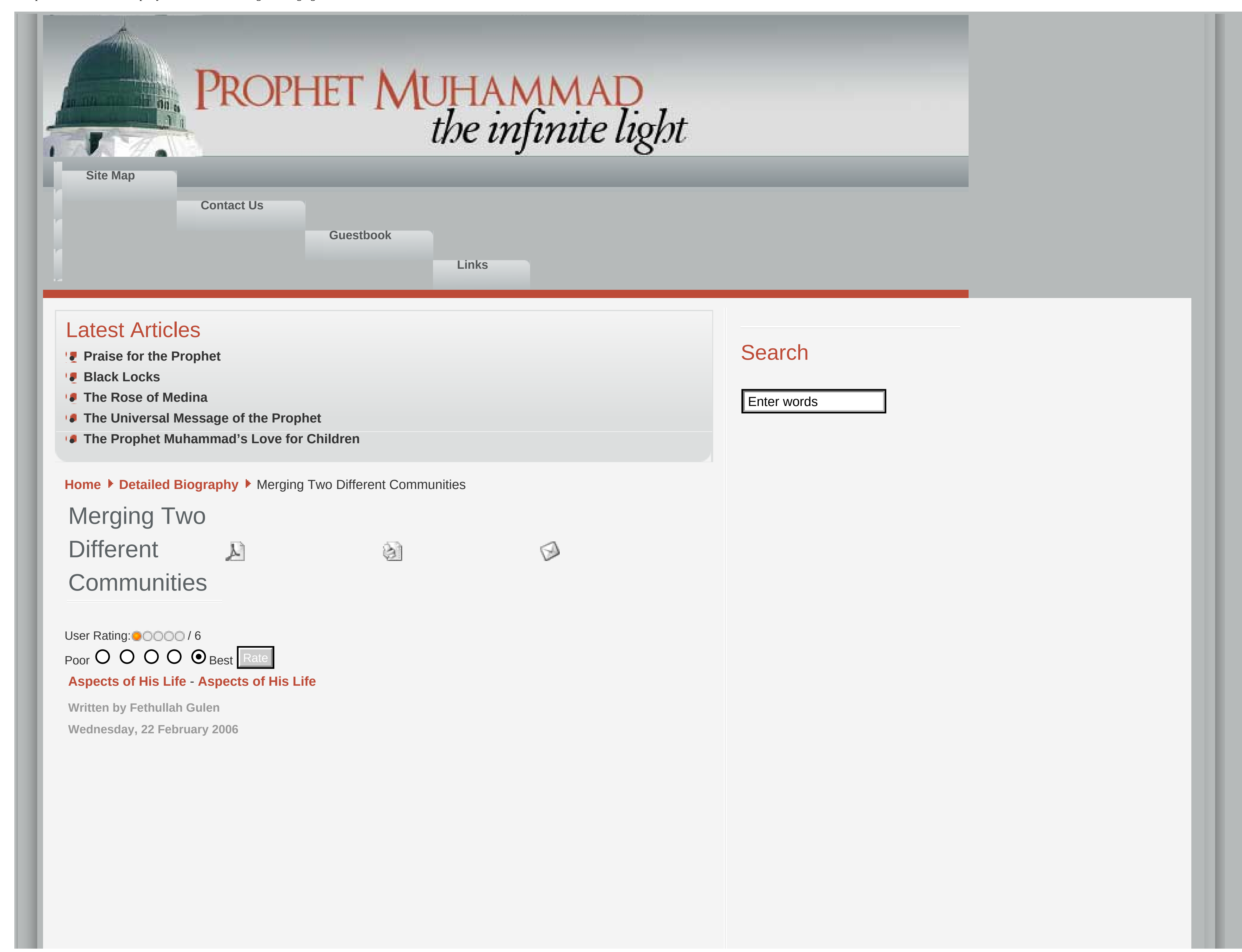
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"It is impossible for anyone who studies the life and character of the great Prophet of Arabia, who knows how he taught and how he lived, to feel anything but reverence for that mighty Prophet, one of the great messengers of the Supreme. And although in what I put to you I shall say many things which may be familiar to many, yet I myself feel whenever I re-read them, a new way of admiration, a new sense of reverence for that mighty Arabian teacher."
-Annie Besant, THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF MUHAMMAD.

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Aspects of His Life - Aspects of His Life
Written by Fethullah Gulen
Wednesday, 22 February 2006

The emigration to Madina marks a turning point for Prophet Muhammad and for Islam. Belief, emigration, and holy struggle are three pillars of a single, sacred truth; three spouts of a fountain from which the water of life flows for the soldiers of truth. After drinking, they convey their message without becoming wearied and, when the opposition cannot be overcome, set out for a new land without regard for home, property, and family. The Prophet's emigration is so significant and sanctified that the virtuous people around him were praised by God as remain known as "the Emigrants" (Muhajirun). Those who welcomed them so warmly to Madina are known as "the Helpers" (Ansar). The Islamic calendar begins with this event.

Despite its significance, emigration is a difficult undertaking. When the Muslims resettle in Madina after years of persecution, they were destitute. Moreover, some were extremely poor, and others, who had earned their lives by trade, had no capital. The Muslims of Madina were mostly farmers, and the city's commercial life was controlled by Jews. Another serious problem was that just before the Messenger's arrival, the Madinans had decided to make 'Abd Allah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul their chief. This plan naturally was abandoned, which made him a bitter enemy of the Messenger and an important foe. The Makkan polytheists still wanted to defeat the Prophet, and worked with him to achieve their goal. He told them: "Don't worry if he spreads Islam here. The main danger is that he might ally with the Christians and Jews against paganism. That is the real threat."

After he settled in Madina, the Messenger helped his people build a mosque. The importance of the mosque for the Muslim community's collective life is unquestionable. They meet there five times a day and, in the Presence of God, their Master, Creator, and Sustainer, increase in belief and submission to Him, the Prophet and Islam, and strengthen their solidarity. Especially in the first centuries of Islam, mosques functioned as places of worship and as centers of learning. The Prophet's Mosque in Madina was, in the time of the Prophet himself and his immediate political successors, also the center of government.

Immediately after settling in Madina, the Messenger established brotherhood between Muslims, particularly between the Emigrants and the Helpers. They became very close to each other. For example, Sa'd ibn Rabi' took his Emigrant "brother" 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf home and said: "Brother, you have left everything in Makka. This house, with everything in it, belongs to both of us. You don't have a wife here; I have two. Whichever of them you like, I'll divorce her so that you may marry her." 'Abd al-Rahman answered him in tears: "Brother, may God bless you with your wife! Please show me to the city bazaar so that I may do some business." [1]

This brotherhood was so deep, sincere, and strong that the Helpers shared everything with the Emigrants. This lasted for some time. However, when the Emigrants had become accustomed to their new environment, one day they asked the Messenger: "O Messenger of God. We emigrated here purely for the sake of God. But our Helper brothers are so good to us that we fear we will consume in this world the reward of our good deeds, which we expect to get in the Hereafter. Also, we feel very indebted to them. Please ask them to let us earn our own living."

The Messenger sent for the Helpers and told them of the situation. The Helpers unanimously objected, finding it unbearable to be separated from their brothers. In the end, to spare the Emigrants' feeling of indebtedness, the Helpers agreed that the Emigrants would work in their fields and gardens in return for wages until they could build their own houses. [2]

As a second step in solving immediate problems, the Messenger signed a pact with the Jewish community in Madina. This document, which some scholars describe as Madina's first constitution, confederated the Muslims and Jews as two separate, independent communities. [3] Since the Messenger took the initiative in making this pact and acted as the final arbiter in all disputes, Madina came under Muslim control.

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"It was not an outward domination, he conquered and subjugated their minds, spirits, hearts, and souls. He became the beloved of hearts, the teacher of minds, the trainer of souls, the ruler of spirits."
-Bediuzzaman Said Nursi

To guarantee Muslims' security within this city-state, the Messenger ordered the establishment of a new bazaar. Until then, Madina's economic life had been controlled by the Jewish community. After this, Jewish economic domination began to decline, for they no longer monopolized Madina's commerce.

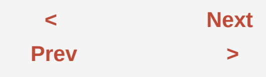
While the Muslim community was establishing itself and growing in strength, it was forced to respond to internal and external attacks. After their victory of Badr, the Muslims fought the Makkans again at the foot of Mount Uhud. Their easy victory during the battle's first part was followed, unfortunately, by a reverse when the archers' disregarded the Prophet's instructions. Seventy Muslims were martyred, and the Messenger was wounded. The Muslim army took shelter on the mountain and prepared to fight back. Lacking enough courage for a further attack, the Makkan forces left. Nevertheless, they changed their mind halfway and decided to march upon Madina. Informed of this, the Messenger mobilized his troops. A single order was enough to accomplish this, even though they were ill or wounded. His every call was a breath of life for their souls, a breath that could revive old, rotten bones. Busiri says:

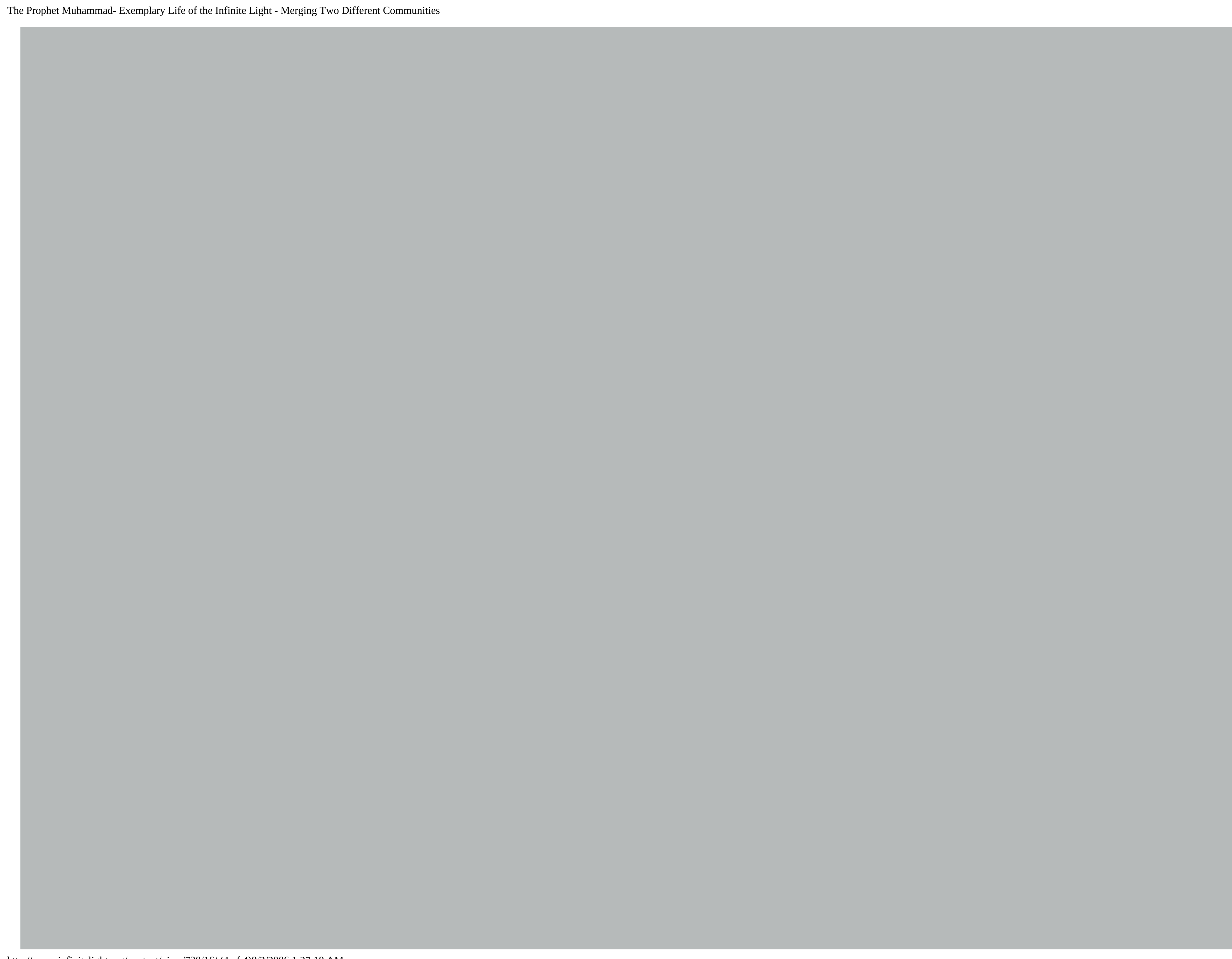
Were his value and greatness to be demonstrated by miracles,

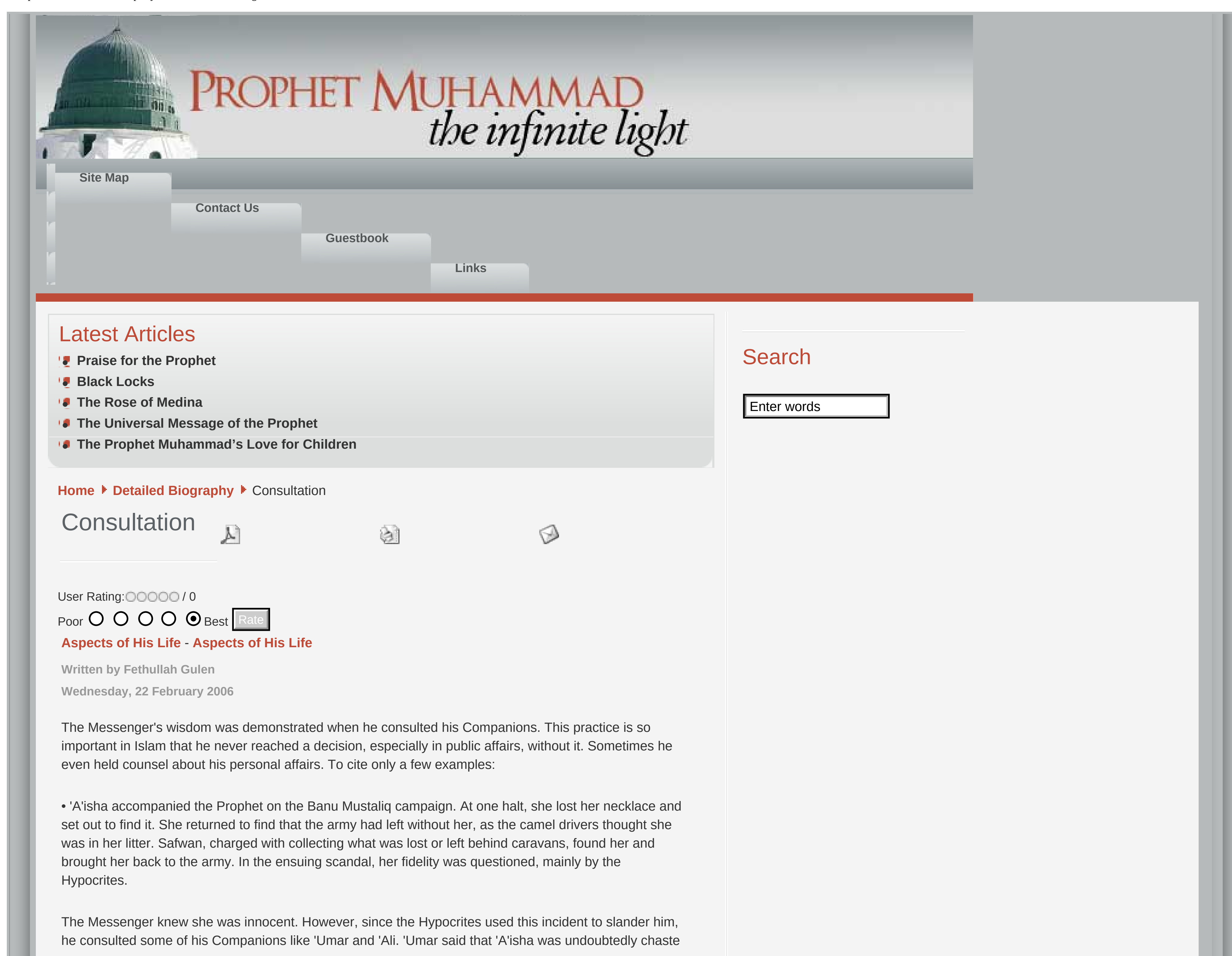
The bones that have rotted away were revived by calling his name.

The half-crushed army set out to counter the enemy. Almost everyone was wounded, but no one wanted to stay behind. In describing the situation, one Companion said: "Some Companions couldn't walk. They said: 'We want to be present at the front where the Messenger has ordered us to go. Even if we cannot fight, we will stand there with spears in our hands.' They were carried on other people's shoulders or backs." Seeing the Muslim army marching toward them, Abu Sufyan ordered his troops to return to Makka. In praising those heroes of Islam, the Qur'an says: Those to whom the people said: "The people have gathered against you, therefore fear them"; but it increased them in faith, and they said: "God is sufficient for us; an excellent Guardian is He" (3:173). [4]

[1] Bukhari, "Manaqib al-Ansar," 3; Ibn Kathir, 3:279.
[2] Bukhari, "Hiba," 35; Muslim, "Jihad," 70.
[3] Ibn Hisham, 2:147.
[4] Bukhari, "Maghazi," 25; Ibn Sa'd, 2:42–9; Ibn Hisham, 3:99-111, 128.







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Consultation

Aspects of His Life - Aspects of His Life

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

The Messenger's wisdom was demonstrated when he consulted his Companions. This practice is so important in Islam that he never reached a decision, especially in public affairs, without it. Sometimes he even held counsel about his personal affairs. To cite only a few examples:

• 'A'isha accompanied the Prophet on the Banu Mustaliq campaign. At one halt, she lost her necklace and set out to find it. She returned to find that the army had left without her, as the camel drivers thought she was in her litter. Safwan, charged with collecting what was lost or left behind caravans, found her and brought her back to the army. In the ensuing scandal, her fidelity was questioned, mainly by the Hypocrites.

The Messenger knew she was innocent. However, since the Hypocrites used this incident to slander him, he consulted some of his Companions like 'Umar and 'Ali. 'Umar said that 'A'isha was undoubtedly chaste

and pure, and that she had been slandered. When asked how he knew, he replied: "O The Messenger, once you were praying. You stopped and explained that Archangel Gabriel had come and informed you that there was some dirt in your slippers. If there were some impurity in 'A'isha, God certainly would have informed you." [1] The Messenger, who once said: "Whoever takes counsel, does not regret it in the end," [2] always consulted those who could give informed advice on a particular matter.

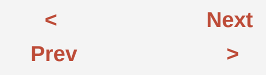
• He consulted with his Companions before Badr, the first major post-Emigration military encounter, about whether the Muslims should fight the approaching Makkan army. The Muslim forces numbered 305 or 313, while the Makkans numbered around one thousand. As mentioned, one spokesman each for the Emigrants and the Helpers stood up and proclaimed their readiness to follow him wherever he might lead them. [3] During his life, all Companions continually promised to follow him in every step he took, and to carry out all of his orders. Despite this, the Messenger consulted with them about almost every community-wide matter so that this practice would become second nature.

• During Badr, the Muslim army was positioned somewhere on the battlefield. Hubab ibn Mundhir, who was not a leading Companion, stood up and said: "O Messenger, if God has not ordered you to assume this place, let's arrange ourselves around the wells and then seal all but one to deny water to the enemy. Set up your camp at the side of that open well (from which we will take water), and we will encircle you." The Messenger adopted this view. [4]

• In 5 ah, the Quraysh allied themselves with certain desert tribes and the Jewish Banu Nadir, who had emigrated from Madina to Khaybar. The Prophet, forewarned of their plans, asked for ideas about how to defeat the enemy offensive. Salman al-Farisi suggested digging a defensive trench around Madina, a stratagem hitherto unknown to the Arabs. The Messenger ordered it to be done. This war was forever after known as the Battle of the Trench (or Ditch). [5]

• The Muslims found the Treaty of Hudaybiya unpalatable, and were reluctant to obey the Prophet's order to sacrifice their sacrificial animals without making the pilgrimage. (One condition of the treaty was that they could not enter Makka that year.) The Messenger consulted with his wife Umm Salama. She replied: "O Messenger, don't repeat your order lest they disobey you and perish. Sacrifice your own animals and take off your pilgrim dress (ihram). When they understand the order is decisive, they'll obey you without hesitation." The Messenger did as she suggested.

[1] Halabi, Insan al-'Uyun, 2:613.
[2] Maythami, Majma' al-Zawa'id, 2:280.
[3] Ibn Sa'd, Tabaqat, 3:162 ; Muslim, "Jihad," 83 ; Ibn Hisham, 2:266–7.
[4] Ibn Hisham, 2:272.
[5] Ibn Hisham, 3:235; Ibn Sa'd, 2:66.



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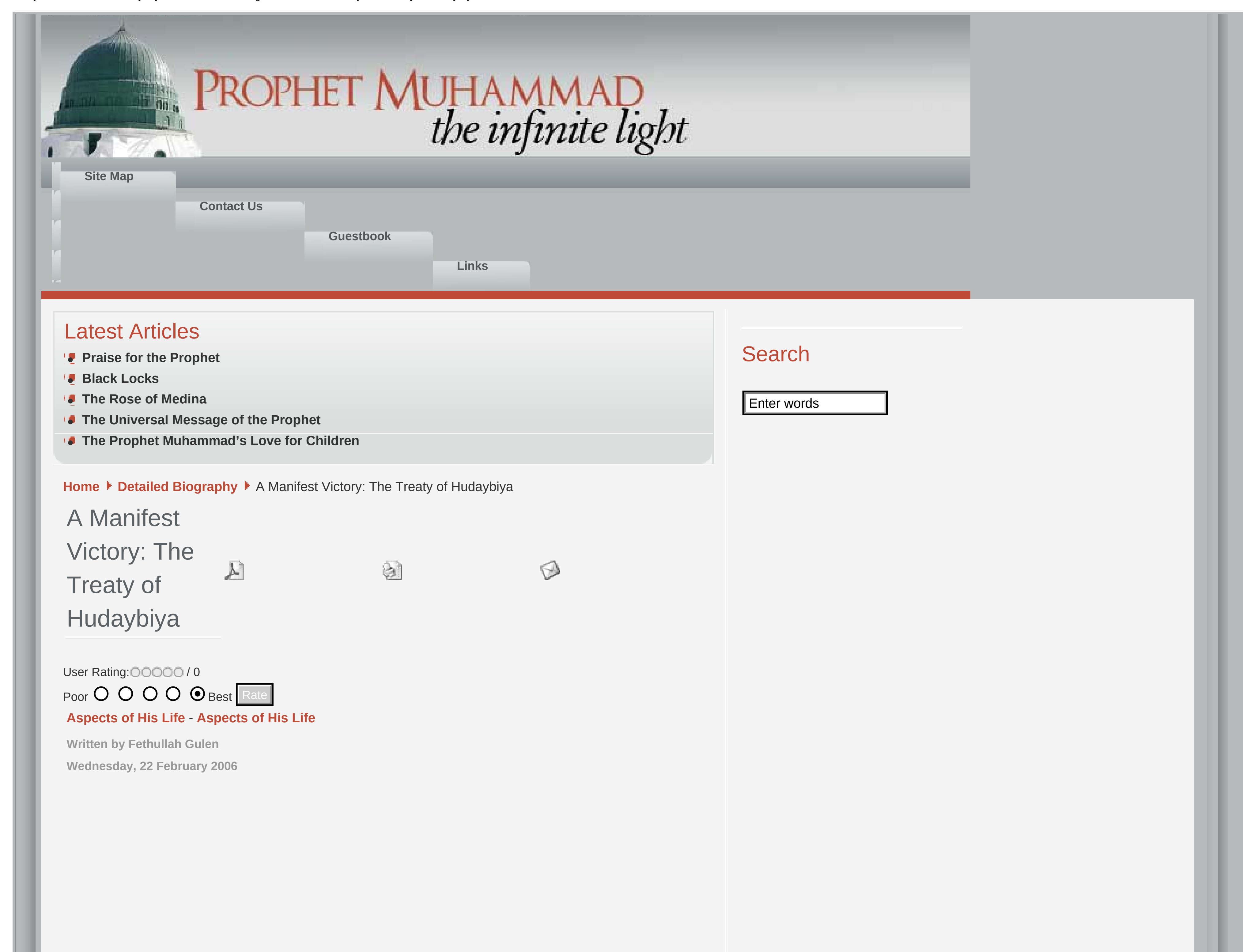
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“. He solves and expounds the strange riddle of the mystery of the world's creation; he discovers and solves the abstruse talisman which is the mystery of the universe; and he provides convincing and satisfying answers to the three awesome and difficult questions that are asked of al1 beings and have always bewildered and occupied minds: "Where do you come from? What are you doing here? Where are you going?""

-Bediuzzaman Said Nursi



A Manifest Victory: The Treaty of Hudaybiya

Aspects of His Life - Aspects of His Life

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

The Messenger was a man of action. He never hesitated about putting his plans or decisions into action, for that would confuse and demoralize his followers. The Messenger always acted with deliberation and consulted others. But once he had decided or planned something, he carried it out immediately and had no second thoughts or a reason to regret his decision. Before acting, he took the necessary precautions, considered the probabilities, and consulted available experts. The ensuing finality of his decisions was an important reason for his victories and why his Companions followed him so completely.

One event worthy of further elaboration is the Treaty of Hudaybiya. In 6 ah, the Messenger told his Companions that he had dreamed they would shortly enter the Holy Mosque in Makka in security, with their heads shaved or their hair cut short. His Companions, especially the Emigrants, were delighted. During that year, the Prophet set out for Makka with 1,500 unarmed men in pilgrim dress (ihram).

Informed of this event, the Quraysh armed themselves and the neighboring tribes to keep the Muslims out of Makka. They sent some 200 soldiers, led by Khalid ibn Walid and Ikrima ibn Abu Jahl, as far as Qura' al-Ghamim. Seeing the Muslims approaching, they returned to Makka to spread the news. When the Muslims reached Hudaybiya, about 12 miles from Makka, the Messenger told them to halt. Learning that there was a shortage of water, he threw an arrow down Hudaybiya's only well. Water began to gush and fill the well. Everyone drank some, performed wudu', and filled their water-skins. [1]

As the Makkans refused to let the Muslims enter Makka, the Messenger sent Budayl ibn Warqa, a man from the Khuda'a tribe (the Muslims' ally), to announce that the Muslims had come for pilgrimage and thus were unarmed. The Quraysh, in reply, sent 'Urwa ibn Mas'ud al-Thaqafi. While talking to the Messenger 'Urwa tried to grasp his beard, a sign of jesting. Mughira ibn Shu'ba struck his hand, saying he would cut it off if 'Urwa tried such a thing again, for his hand was impure.

Mughira was 'Urwa's cousin, and had accepted Islam about 2 months earlier. In fact, only a few months ago 'Urwa had paid the blood money for a crime Mughira had committed. How Islam had changed Mughira! The Companions' commitment to their cause and devotion to the Messenger shocked 'Urwa, who returned to the Quraysh and said: "I have visited Chosroes, Caesar, and the Negus. None of their subjects are so devoted to their rulers as his Companions are to Muhammad. I advise you not to struggle with him." [2]

The Quraysh did not heed his advice. Nor did they give a warm welcome to Kharash ibn Umayya, whom the Messenger sent after 'Urwa. Kharash was followed by 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, who had powerful relatives among the Quraysh. Although 'Uthman came to negotiate with the Makkans, they imprisoned him. When he did not return at the expected time, rumors circulated that he had been killed. At this point, the Prophet, sitting under a tree, took an oath from his Companions that they would hold together and fight to the death. He represented the absent 'Uthman by proxy in this oath. Only Jadd ibn Qays, who hid behind a camel, did not take it. The revelation that came on this occasion reads: God was well pleased with the believers when they were swearing allegiance to you under the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down peace of reassurance on them, and has rewarded them with a near victory (48:18).

In that moment of tension, a cloud of dust appeared in the distance. This turned out to be a Makkan delegation led by Suhayl ibn 'Amr. When the Messenger learned this, he took his name ("easiness") as a good omen and told his Companions: "The situation has eased." Eventually, the Quraysh agreed to a truce and the Treaty of Hudaybiya was concluded.

Under this treaty, the Prophet and his followers could make pilgrimage the following year, not this one, at which time the Makkans would vacate the city for 3 days The treaty also stipulated a 10-year truce, that

people or tribes could join or ally themselves with whoever they wished, and that Qurayshi subjects or dependents who defected to Madina would be returned. This last condition was not reciprocal, and thus was opposed in the Muslim camp. It shocked people like 'Umar, who questioned the Messenger about it. However, it really was of little importance. Muslims sent back to Makka were not likely to renounce Islam; on the contrary, they would be agents of change within Makka.

Just before the treaty was signed, Abu Jandal, Suhayl's son, arrived in chains and asked to join the Muslims. The Messenger had to return him to his father in tears. However, he whispered to him: "God will shortly save you and those of your like." [3]

Shortly after the treaty was signed, 'Utba ibn Asid (also known as Abu Basir) defected to Madina. The Quraysh sent two men to demand his return. On their way back to Makka, Abu Basir escaped, killed one man and wounded the other. The Messenger, citing the treaty's terms, did not allow him to stay in Madina. So he settled at Iyss, a place on the road from Makka to Syria. The Muslims held in Makka began to join Abu Basir. As this settlement grew, the Makkans perceived a potential threat to their trade route. This forced them to ask the Messenger to annul the relevant term and admit defecting Makkans to Madina.

The Qur'an called the Treaty of Hudaybiya "a manifest victory": We have given you a manifest victory (48:1). This proved true for several reasons, among them:

• By signing this treaty after years of conflict, the Quraysh admited that the Muslims were their equals. In effect, they gave up their struggle but did not admit it to themselves. Seeing the Makkans deal with the Prophet as an equal and a ruler, a rising tide of converts flowed toward Madina from all over Arabia.

• Many Qurayshis would benefit from the resulting peace by finally reflecting on what was going on. Such leading Qurayshis as Khalid ibn Walid, 'Amr ibn al-'As, and 'Uthman ibn Talha, all famous for their military and political skills, accepted Islam. 'Uthman was the person entrusted with the Ka'ba's keys, and after the conquest of Makka the Messenger honored him with the same task.

• The Quraysh used to regard the Ka'ba as their exclusive property, and made its visitors pay them a tribute. By not subjecting the Muslims' deferred pilgrimage to this condition, the Quraysh unwittingly ended their monopoly. The bedouin tribes now realized that the Quraysh had no right to claim exclusive ownership.

• At the time, there were Muslim men and women living in Makka. Not everyone in Madina knew who they were. Some were serving the Messenger as spies. Had a fight taken place in Makka, the victorious Muslim army might have killed some of them. This would have caused great personal anguish, as well as the martyrdom or identification of the Prophet's spies. The treaty prevented such a disaster.

The Qur'an points to this fact: He restrained their hands from you, and your hands from them, in the hollow of Makka, after He made you victors over them. God sees the things you do. They are the ones who disbelieved, and banned you from the Holy Mosque, and hindered the sacrificial animals from reaching their place of sacrifice. If it had not been for certain believing men and believing women (in Makka) whom you knew not—lest you should trample them and thus incur guilt for them unknowingly; that God may admit into His Mercy whom He will—(the believers and unbelievers) had been clearly separated, then We would have chastised the unbelievers among them with a painful chastisement (48:24–25).

• The Prophet performed the minor pilgrimage the following year. The assertion: "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God," rang throughout Makka. The Quraysh, camped on Abu Qubays

Quote

"It was the first religion that preached and practiced democracy; for, in the mosque, when the call for prayer is sounded and worshippers are gathered together, the democracy of Islam is embodied five times a day when the peasant and king kneel side by side and proclaim: 'God Alone is Great'... I have been struck over and over again by this indivisible unity of Islam that makes man instinctively a brother."
-S. Naidu, IDEALS OF ISLAM, vide Speeches & Writing

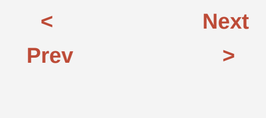
Hill, heard this portent of Islam's coming triumph. This was, in fact, God's fulfilling the vision He had given to His Messenger: God has indeed fulfilled the vision He vouchsafed to His Messenger: You shall enter the Holy Mosque, if God wills, in security, your heads shaved, your hair cut short, not fearing. He knew what you knew not, and, granted, besides this, a nigh victory (48:27).

• The treaty allowed the Messenger to deal with others. In the post-treaty expeditions, the Muslims conquered the formidable Jewish citadels of Khaybar, telling them either to convert or accept Muslim rule by paying tribute in lieu of protection (jizya). Their neighbours, as well as other Arab tribes, were impressed with the Islamic state's growing strength.

The Muslims faithfully observed the treaty's terms; however, a tribe allied to the Makkans did not. The Banu Bakr attacked the Banu Khuda'a, who were allied with the Prophet. So in December 629, the Messenger marched a 10,000-man army against Makka, and captured it with almost no resistance on the first day of the new year. The Ka'ba was purified of idols and, over the next couple of days, the Makkans accepted Islam. This was due to happen because:

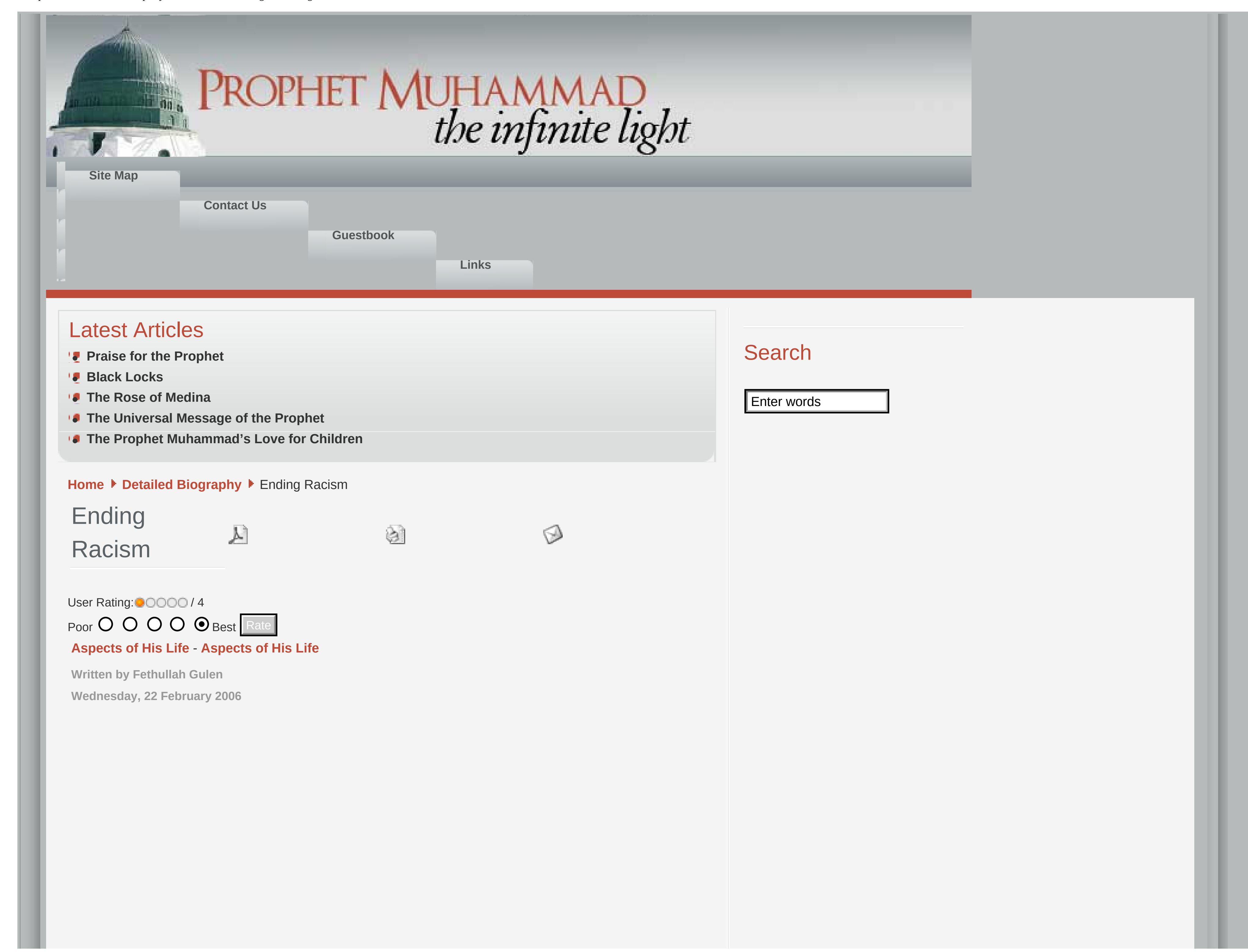
He has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may uplift it above every religion. God suffices as a witness. Muhammad is the Messenger of God, and those who are with him are hard against the unbelievers, merciful to one another. You see them bowing, prostrating, seeking grace from God and (His) good pleasure. Their mark is on their faces, the trace of prostration. That is their likeness in the Torah, and their likeness in the Gospel is: as a seed that puts forth its shoot, and strengthens it, and it grows stout and rises straight upon its stalk, pleasing the sowers, that through them He may enrage the unbelievers. God has promised those of them who believe and do deeds of righteousness forgiveness and a mighty wage (48.28–29).

[1] Muslim, Hadith No.1834; Bukhari, 4:256.
[2] Bukhari, 3:180; Ibn Hanbal, 4:324; Tabari, 3:75.
[3] Ibn Hisham, 3:321–333; Ibn Kathir, 4:188-193.


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Ending Racism

Aspects of His Life - **Aspects of His Life**

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

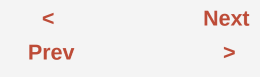
Racism is one of our age's severest problems. Everyone has heard of how black Africans were transported across the Atlantic Ocean in specially designed ships, thought of and treated exactly like livestock. They were enslaved, forced to change their names and religion and language, were never entitled even to hope for true freedom, and were denied all human rights. The West's attitude toward non-Westerners remained unchanged until recent times. As a result, the political and social condition of Africans, even in the case of their descendents who lived in the West amidst non-black Americans or Europeans as theoretically equal fellow citizens, remained second-class (or even lower) citizens.

When the Messenger was raised as a Prophet, such racism was prevalent in Makka in the guise of tribalism. The Quraysh considered themselves (in particular) and Arabs (in general) superior to all other people. The Messenger came with the Divine Message and proclaimed that: "No Arab is superior to a non-Arab, and no white person is superior to a black person"; [1] Superiority is by righteousness and devotion to God alone (49:13); and: "Even if a black Abyssinian Muslim were to rule over Muslims, he should be obeyed." [2]

The Messenger eradicated color-based racism and discrimination so successfully that, for example, 'Umar once said of Bilal, who was black: "Bilal is our master, and was emancipated by our master Abu Bakr." [3] Zayd ibn Haritha, a black slave emancipated by the Messenger, was his adopted son before the Revelation banned such adoption. The Prophet married him to Zaynab bint Jahsh, one of the noblest (and non-black) Arab and Muslim women. In addition, he appointed Zayd commander of the Muslim army sent against the Byzantine Empire, even though it included such leading Companions as Abu Bakr, 'Umar, Ja'far ibn Abu Talib (the Messenger's cousin), and Khalid ibn Walid (the invincible general of the age). [4] The Prophet appointed Zayd's son Usama to command the army he formed just before his death. Included therein were such leading Companions as Abu Bakr, 'Umar, Khalid, Abu 'Ubayda, Talha, and Zubayr. This established in the Muslims' hearts and minds that superiority is not by birth or color or blood, but by righteousness and devotion to God.

During his caliphate, 'Umar paid Usama a higher salary than his own son, 'Abd Allah. When his son asked why, 'Umar replied: "My son, I do so because I know the Messenger loved Usama's father more than me, and Usama more than you." [5]

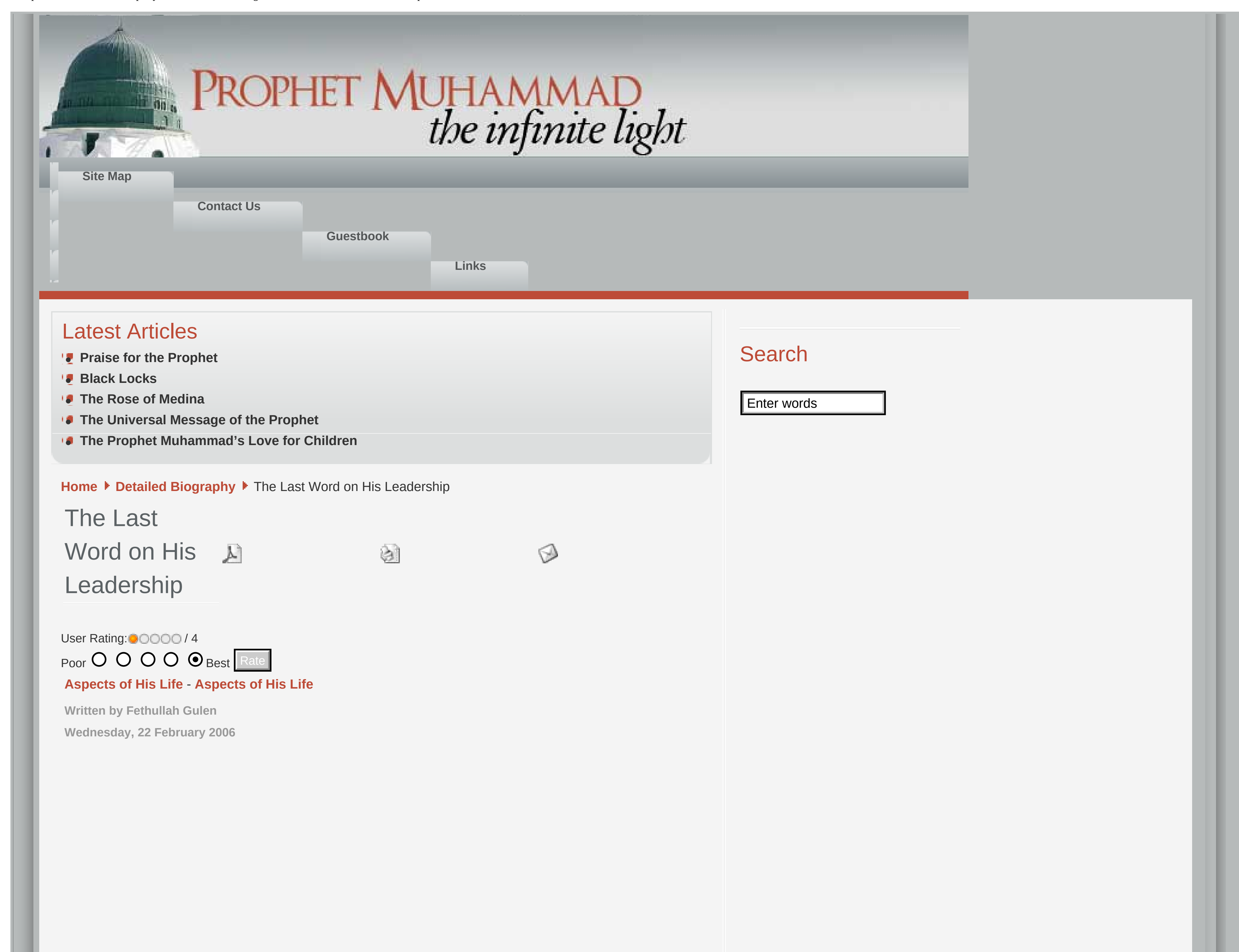
[1] Ibn Hanbal, 5:441.
[2] Muslim, " 'Imara," 37.
[3] Ibn Hajar, al-Isaba, 1:165.
[4] Muslim, "Fada'il al-Sahaba," 63.
[5] Ibn Sa'd, Tabaqat, 4:70; Ibn Hajar, 1:564.



Quote

"His readiness to undergo persecutions for his beliefs, the high moral character of the men who believed in him and looked up to him as leader, and the greatness of his ultimate achievement - all argue his fundamental integrity. To suppose Muhammad an impostor raises more problems than it solves. Moreover, none of the great figures of history is so poorly appreciated in the West as Muhammad."

-W. Montgomery Watt, MOHAMMAD AT MECCA, Oxford, 195



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The Last Word on His Leadership

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Aspects of His Life - **Aspects of His Life**

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

Prophet Muhammad had all the necessary leadership qualities for success in every aspect of life. But, more importantly, he was able to lead his community to success in every field. He is the source from which flowed all later developments related to command, statecraft, religion, spiritual development, and so on in the Muslim world.

In general, leaders should have the following qualities:

• Realism. Their messages and demands should not contradict reality. They should understand prevailing conditions as they actually are, and be aware of any advantages and disadvantages.

• Absolute belief in their message. Their conviction should never falter, and they should never renounce their mission.

• Personal courage. Even if left alone, they should have enough courage to persevere. When some of his pursuers reached the mouth of the cave in which they were hiding, Abu Bakr was afraid something would happen to the Messenger. However, the Prophet only said: Don't worry, for God is with us (9:40).

• Strong willpower and resolve. They should never experience even one moment of hopelessness.

• Awareness of personal responsibility. Everything should be directed toward fulfilling this responsibility. In no way should they be seduced by the world's charms and life's attractions.

• Far-sighted and goal-centered. Leaders should be able to discern and plan for potential developments. They should know how to evaluate the past, present, and future to reach a new synthesis. Those who frequently change their opinions only spread chaos in the community.

• Personal knowledge of each follower. Leaders should be fully aware of each follower's disposition, character, abilities, shortcomings, ambitions, and weak points. If they lack this knowledge, how can they fill vacant posts with the appropriate people?

• Strong character and praiseworthy virtues. Leaders should be determined but flexible while carrying out decisions, and know when to be unyielding and implacable or relenting and compassionate. They should know when to be earnest and dignified, when to be modest, and always be upright, truthful, trustworthy, and just.

• No worldly ambitions or abuse of authority. Leaders should live like the poorest members of their community. They should never discriminate among their subjects; rather, they should strive to love them, prefer them over themselves, and act so that their people will love them sincerely. They should be faithful to their community, and secure their community's loyalty and devotion in return.

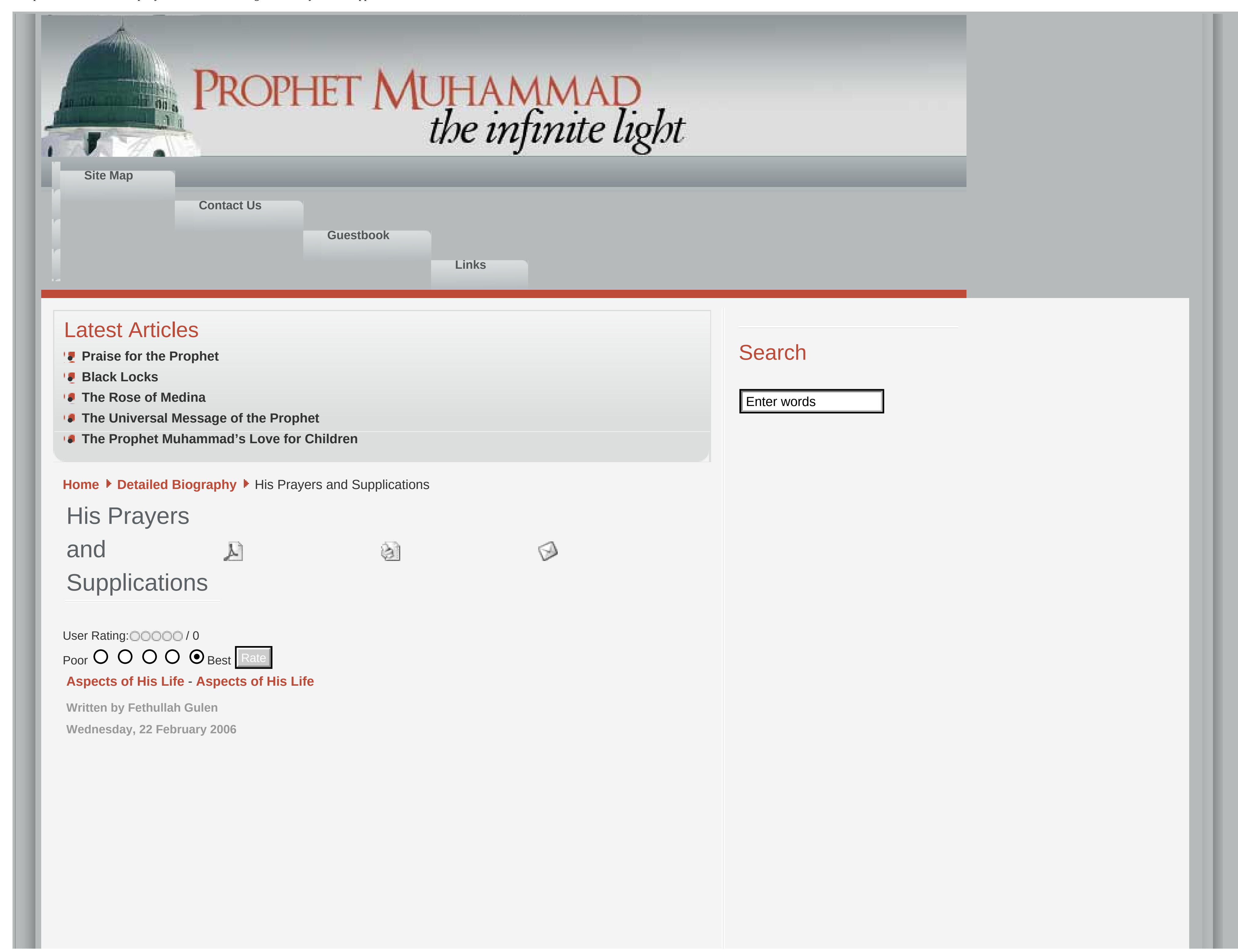
The Messenger possessed all of these qualities, and many more as well. To cite only a few examples, he never even thought of abandoning his mission when confronted with great hostility and tempting bribes. Instead, he would tell them: "Say: 'There is no god but God,' and prosper in both worlds." [1] When his Companions complained about the harsh conditions and persecution in Makka, he answered: "You show haste. A day will come and a woman will travel from Hira [a town in southern Iraq] to Makka alone on her camel (in security) and circumambulate the Ka'ba as an act of worship, and the treasures of the Sassanid Emperor will be captured by my community." [2]

Once the Makkan leaders came to him and said: "If you meet with us on a day when others, especially those poor ones, are not present, we may talk to you about accepting your religion." They despised poor Muslims like Bilal, 'Ammar, and Habbab, and desired special treatment. The Messenger rejected such proposals without a second thought. The verses revealed addressed him as follows: Send not away those who call on their Master morning and evening, seeking His Face (6:52), and Persevere together with those who call on their Master morning and evening, seeking His Face (18:28).

[1] Bukhari, "Tafsir," 1; Muslim, "Iman," 355.
[2] Bukhari, "Manaqib, " 25.

Quote

"It was the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace, who proclaimed true freedom to humanity, and ingrained in human consciousness that all human beings are equal before the law. He established that superiority lies in virtue, piety, and morality. He regarded proclaiming the truth against all oppressors and oppressive thought as a kind of worship."
-Fethullah Gulen



His Prayers and Supplications

Aspects of His Life - Aspects of His Life

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

The Messenger always prayed to God before any action. When we look through the books of Tradition (Hadith), we find no case in which he did not pray. As mentioned earlier, prayer is a mystery of servanthood to God, and the Messenger is the foremost in servanthood. This is made clear with every repetition of the declaration of faith: "I bear witness there is no god but God; I also bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger." Note that he is called servant before Messenger. Whatever he intended to do, he referred it to God through prayer.

God is the Creator of us and whatever we do. Although we should take necessary precautions and follow precedents to accomplish things in this material world, where cause and effect has a special place, we should never forget that everything ultimately depends on God for its existence. Therefore, we must combine action and prayer. This is also required by our belief in God's Unity.

The Messenger's knowledge of God can never be equaled. As a result, he was the foremost in love of, and paradoxically, in fear of Him. He was perfectly conscious that everything depends on God for its existence and subsistence. Whatever God wills, happens: When He wills a thing, His command is to say to it "Be," and it is (36:82). Things exist and the universe operates according to the laws established by God and the fulfillment of prerequisites. Fully aware of this, the Messenger did what he had to and then, combining action with prayer, left the result to God with absolute confidence.

His supplications have been transmitted to us. When we read them, we see that they have deep meaning and accord exactly with the surrounding circumstances. They reflect profound belief, deep sincerity, absolute submission and complete confidence. Some examples are given below:

• When you go to bed, perform wudu' as you do before daily prayers and pray: "O God, hoping for (Your Mercy) and fearing (Your wrath), I submit myself to You, refer my affairs to You, and take refuge in You. There is no refuge or source of safety from Your wrath except You. I believe in the Book You sent down, and the Prophet you raised."

• Without sins, a soul is like a polished mirror or a white piece of cloth. Sins dirty the soul, and can be expunged only by repentance and asking His forgiveness. The Prophet used to pray the following, even though he was sinless: "O God, put between me and errors a distance as great as that which you have put between East and West. O God, cleanse me of my errors as a white garment is cleansed of dirt." The words used and the comparisons made in this prayer are so meaningful that their explanation could fill a whole volume.

In addition to these supplications for specific cases, the Prophet also left behind comprehensive supplications of various lengths. We present some of them here:

• God, I ask You for all good, including what is at hand and what is deferred, what I already know and what I don't know. I take refuge in You from every evil, including what is at hand and what is deferred, what I already know and what I don't know.

•God, nothing hinders what You grant, nor is anything granted that You hinder. No wealthy one can do us good, as wealth belongs to You.

• God, I have not told anything, taken an oath, made a vow, or done anything that You did not previously will. Whatever You willed is, and whatever You didn't will is not. There is no strength or power save with You, and You are indeed All-Powerful over everything.

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• God, whatever prayer I have said, let it be for whomever You have mercy, and whatever curse I have called down, let it be for whomever You have cursed. Surely You are my Guardian in this world and the Hereafter. Make me die as a Muslim, and include me among the righteous.

• God, I ask You for contentment after misfortune, a peaceful life after death, the pleasure of observing Your Face, and a desire to meet You. I take refuge in You from wronging others and from being wronged, from showing animosity and being subject to animosity, and from erring or committing unforgivable sins. If You leave me to myself, you leave me in weakness, need, sinfulness and error. I depend only on Your Mercy, so forgive all my sins, for only You can do so. Accept my repentance, for You are the Oft-Relenting, All-Compassionate.

• God, You deserve most to be mentioned, and none but You deserve to be worshipped. You are more helpful than anyone whose help may be sought, more affectionate than every ruler, more generous than anyone who may be asked for something, and more generous than anyone who gives. You are the Monarch without partners, and the Unique One without like. Everything is perishable except You. You are never obeyed but by Your permission, and never disobeyed but within Your knowledge. When somebody obeys You, You reward them; when someone disobeys You, You forgive them. You witness everything, being nearer to it than any other witness; and protect everything, being nearer to it than any other protector. You ordained the acts of all people and determined their time of death. You know what is in every mind, and all secrets are manifest to You. The lawful is what You have made lawful; the forbidden is what You have forbidden. Religion is what You have laid down; the commandment is what You have decreed. The creation is Your creation, and the servants are Your servants. You are God, the All-Clement, All-Compassionate. I ask You, for the sake of the light of Your Face, by which the Heavens and Earth were illuminated, for the sake of every right belonging to You, and for the sake of those who ask of You, to forgive me just in this morning and just in this evening, and to protect me, by Your Power, from Hellfire.

• God, I seek refuge in You from all knowledge that gives no benefit, from a heart that does not fear You, from an unsatisfied soul, and from prayer that cannot be answered.

• God, I ask You for steadfastness in my affairs, resolution in guidance, gratitude for Your bounties and acceptable service to You, and a truthful tongue and a sound heart. I seek refuge in You from the evil of what You know. I ask You for the good of what You know, and Your forgiveness for what You already know. Surely You are the Knower of the Unseen.

• God, I ask You to enable me to do good, to refrain from vice, to love the poor, and to forgive me and have mercy on me. When You will people's deviation and dissension and disorder in public life, make me die before taking part in that disorder. I ask You for Your love and for the love of whom You love, and the love of the acts that will make me nearer to Your love.

• God, I ask You for the good in the beginning and in the end, in its most comprehensive form with its beginning and result, its manifest and secret kinds, and for the highest rank in Paradise.

• God, help me remember and mention You, thank You, and worship You most properly.

• God, I ask You for guidance, fear of You, chastity, and independence of others.

• God, bring all of our affairs to a good conclusion, protect us from disgrace and ignominy in the world, and from being tormented in the Hereafter.

Quote

"It was the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace, who proclaimed true freedom to humanity, and ingrained in human consciousness that all human beings are equal before the law. He established that superiority lies in virtue, piety, and morality. He regarded proclaiming the truth against all oppressors and oppressive thought as a kind of worship."
-Fethullah Gulen

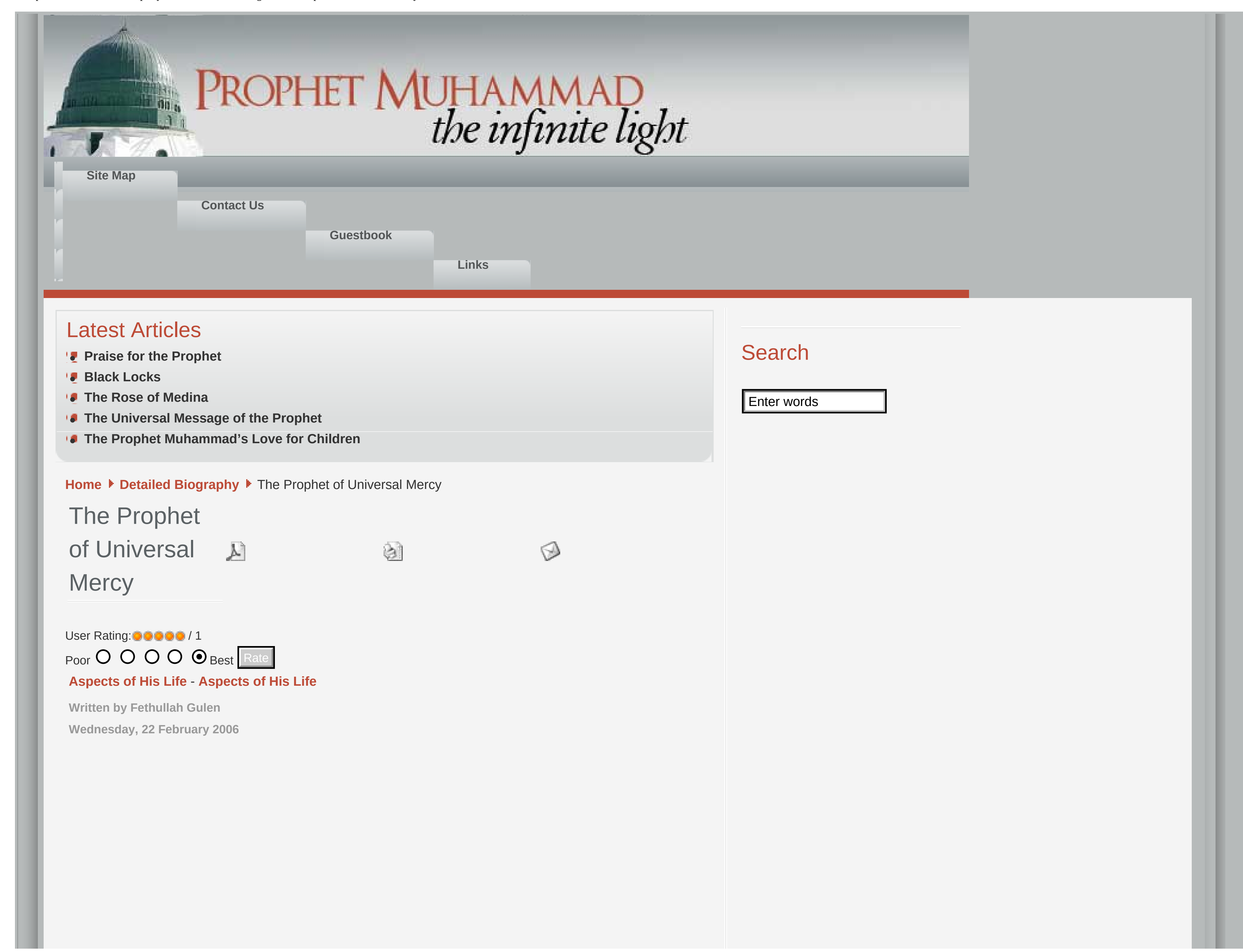
• God, we ask You for all of the good for which Your Prophet Muhammad asked You, and seek refuge in You from every evil from which Your Prophet Muhammad sought refuge in You.

Prayer was a fundamental part of the Prophet's life. All the supplications quoted, together with many, have become keys in the hands of such great saints as Abu Hasan al-Shadhili, Ahmad al-Badawi, Ahmad al-Rifa'i, and 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, who used them to knock on the door of God's Mercy.

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Aspects of His Life - **Aspects of His Life**

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

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The beginning of existence was an act of mercy and compassion without which the universe would be in chaos. Everything came into existence through compassion, and by compassion it continues to exist in harmony.

Muslim sages say that the universe is the All-Compassionate One's breath. In other words, the universe was created to manifest the Divine Name the All-Compassionate. Its subsistence depends on the same Name. This Name manifests itself first as the All-Provider, so that all living creatures can receive the food or nourishment they need to survive.

Life is God Almighty's foremost and most manifest blessing, and the true and everlasting life is that of the Hereafter. Since we can deserve this life by pleasing God, He sent Prophets and revealed Scriptures out of His compassion for humanity. For this reason, while mentioning His blessings upon humanity in Surat al-Rahman (the All-Merciful), He begins: Al-Rahman. He taught the Qur'an, created humanity, and taught it speech (55:1-4).

All aspects of this life are a rehearsal for the afterlife, and every creature is engaged in action toward this end. Order is evident in every effort, and compassion resides in every achievement. Some "natural" events or social convulsions may seem disagreeable at first, but we should not regard them as incompatible with compassion. They are like dark clouds or lightning and thunder that, although frightening, nevertheless bring us good tidings of rain. Thus the whole universe praises the All-Compassionate.

Muslim sages consider the Qur'an a "created book" issuing from His Attribute of Will. To write a book that people could not understand would be pointless. Therefore, He created Muhammad to tell people what the universe really means, and to relay His Commandments in the Qur'an through Muhammad so that we can know what is expected of us. Only by following these Commandments can we attain an eternal life of happiness. The Qur'an is the ultimate and most comprehensive Divine Revelation; Islam is the last, perfected, and universal form of Divine Religion; and Prophet Muhammad is the embodiment of Divine Compassion, one sent by God as a mercy for all worlds.

Prophet Muhammad is like a spring of pure water in the heart of a desert, a source of light in an all-enveloping darkness. Whoever appeals to this spring can take as much water as needed to quench their thirst, to become purified of all their sins, and to become illumined with the light of belief. Mercy was like a magic key in his hands, for with it he opened hearts that were so hardened and rusty that no one thought they could be opened. But he did even more: he lit a torch of belief in them.

The Messenger preached Islam, the religion of universal mercy. However, some self-proclaimed humanists say that Islam is "a religion of the sword." This is completely wrong. They make a great deal of noise when animals are killed or when one of their own is harmed, but are silent when Muslims are massacred. Their world is built on personal interest. It should be pointed out that abusing the feeling of compassion is just as harmful—sometimes even more harmful—than having no compassion at all.

Amputating a gangrenous limb is an act of compassion for the whole body. Likewise oxygen and hydrogen, when mixed in the proper ratios, form water, a most vital substance. When this ratio changes, however, each element resumes its original combustible identity.

Similarly, it is quite important to apportion compassion and to identify who deserves it, for "compassion for a wolf sharpens its appetite, and not being content with what it receives, it demands even more." Compassion for wrongdoers makes them more aggressive and encourages them to work against others. In fact, true compassion requires that such people be prevented from doing wrong. When the Messenger told

his Companions to help people when they were just and unjust, they asked him to explain this seeming paradox. He replied: "You help such people by preventing them from engaging in injustice." So, compassion requires that those who cause trouble either be deprived of their means for, or prevented from, doing so. Otherwise, they eventually will take control and do as they please.

The Messenger's compassion encompassed every creature. In his role as an invincible commander and able statesman, he knew allowing blood-stained, blood-thirsty people to control others would be the most terrible form of tyranny imaginable. Therefore, out of compassion, he required that lambs should be able to live in security against wolves' attacks. He desired, of course, that everyone be guided. In fact, this was his greatest concern: Yet it may be, if they believe not in this Message, you will consume yourself, following after them, with grief (18:6).

But how should he deal with those who persisted in unbelief and fought him to destroy both him and his Message? He had to fight such people, for universal compassion encompasses every creature. This is why, when he was wounded severely at Uhud, he raised his hands and prayed: "O God, forgive my people, for they don't know." [1]

The Makkans, his own people, inflicted so much suffering on him that he finally emigrated to Madina. Even after that, the next 5 years were far from peaceful. However, when he conquered Makka without bloodshed in the twenty-first year of his Prophethood, he asked the Makkan unbelievers: "How do you expect me to treat you?" They responded unanimously: "You are a noble one, the son of a noble one." He then told them his decision: "You may leave, for no reproach this day shall be on you. May God forgive you. He is the Most Compassionate of the Compassionate." [2]

Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror said the same thing to the defeated Byzantines after conquering Istanbul 825 years later. Such is the universal compassion of Islam.

The Messenger displayed the highest degree of compassion toward the believers: There has come to you a Messenger from among yourselves; grievous to him is your suffering; anxious is he over you, full of concern for you, for the believers full of pity, compassionate (9:128). He lowered unto believers his wing of tenderness through mercy (15:88), and was the guardian of believers and nearer to them than their selves (33:6). When one of his Companions died, he asked those at the funeral if the deceased had left any debts. On learning that he had, the Prophet mentioned the above verse and announced that the creditors should come to him for repayment. [3]

His compassion even encompassed the Hypocrites and unbelievers. He knew who the Hypocrites were, but never identified them, for this would have deprived them of the rights of full citizenship they had gained by their outward confession of faith and practice. Since they lived among Muslims, their unbelief in eternal life may have been reduced or changed to doubt, thus diminishing their fear of death and the pain caused by the assertion of eternal non-existence after death.

God did not send a collective destruction upon the unbelievers, although He had eradicated many such people in the past: But God would never chastise them while you were among them; God would never chastise them as they begged forgiveness (8:33). This verse refers to unbelievers of whatever time. God will not destroy peoples altogether as long as those who follow the Messenger are alive. Besides, He has left the door of repentance open until the Last Day. Anyone can accept Islam or ask God's forgiveness, regardless of how sinful they consider themselves to be.

For this reason, a Muslim's enmity toward unbelievers is a form of pity. When 'Umar saw an 80-year-old

Quote

“I BELIEVE IN ONE GOD, AND MAHOMET, AN APOSTLE OF GOD' is the simple and invariable profession of Islam. The intellectual image of the Deity has never been degraded by any visible idol; the honor of the Prophet has never transgressed the measure of human virtues; and his living precepts have restrained the gratitude of his disciples within the bounds of reason and religion.”

-EDWARD GIBBON and SIMON OCKLEY, HISTORY OF THE SAR

priest, he sat down and sobbed. When asked why he did so, he replied: "God assigned him so long a life span, but he has not been able to find the true path." 'Umar was a disciple of the Messenger, who said: "I was not sent to call down curses on people, but as a mercy" and

I am Muhammad, and Ahmad (praised one), and Muqaffi (the Last Prophet); I am Hashir (the final Prophet in whose presence the dead will be resurrected); the Prophet of repentance (the Prophet for whom the door of repentance will always remain open), and the Prophet of mercy.

Archangel Gabriel also benefited from the mercy of the Qur'an. Once the Prophet asked Gabriel whether he had any share in the mercy contained in the Qur'an. Gabriel replied that he did, and explained: "I was not certain about my end. However, when the verse: (One) obeyed, and moreover, trustworthy and secured (81:21) was revealed, I felt secure about it." When Ma'iz was punished for fornication, a Companion verbally abused him. The Messenger frowned at him and said: "You have backbitten your friend. His repentance and asking God's pardon for his sin would be enough to forgive all the sinners in the world." [4]

The Messenger was particularly compassionate toward children. Whenever he saw a child crying, he sat beside him or her and shared his or her feelings. He felt the pain of a mother for her child more than the mother herself. Once he said: "I stand in prayer and wish to prolong it. However, I hear a child cry and shorten the prayer to lessen the mother's anxiety."

He took children in his arms and hugged them. Once when hugging his beloved grandsons Hasan and Hussayn, Aqra ibn Habis told him: "I have 10 children, and have never kissed any of them." The Messenger responded: "One without pity for others is not pitied." According to another version, he said or added: "What can I do for you if God has removed compassion from you?"

Once, he said: "Pity those on Earth so that those in the Heavens will pity you." Once when Sa'd ibn 'Ubada became ill, the Messenger visited him at home and, seeing his faithful Companion in a pitiful state, began to cry. He said: "God does not punish because of tears or grief, but He punishes because of this," and he pointed to his tongue. [5] When 'Uthman ibn Mad'un died, he wept profusely. During the funeral, a woman remarked: "'Uthman flew like a bird to Paradise." Even in that mournful state, the Prophet did not lose his balance and corrected the woman: "How do you know this? Even I don't know this, and I am a Prophet."

A member of the Banu Muqarrin clan once beat his maidservant. She informed the Messenger, who sent for the master. He said: "You have beaten her without any justifiable right. Free her." [6] Freeing a slave free was far better for the master than being punished in the Hereafter because of that act. The Messenger always protected and supported widows, orphans, the poor and disabled even before announcing his Prophethood. When he returned home in excitement from Mount Hira after the first Revelation, his wife Khadija told him: "I hope you will be the Prophet of this Umma, for you always tell the truth, fulfill your trust, support your relatives, help the poor and weak, and feed guests." [7]

His compassion even encompassed animals. We hear from him: "A prostitute was guided to truth by God and ultimately went to Paradise because she gave water to a dog dying of thirst. Another woman was sent to Hell because she left a cat to die of hunger." Once while returning from a military campaign, a few Companions removed some young birds from their nest to stroke them. The mother bird came back and, not finding its babies, began to fly around screeching. When told of this, the Messenger became angry and ordered the birds to be put back in the nest. [8]

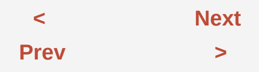
Once he told his Companions that God reproached an earlier Prophet for setting fire to a nest of ants. [9]

While in Mina, some of his Companions attacked a snake in order to kill it. However, it managed to escape. Watching this from afar, the Messenger remarked: "It was saved from your evil, as you were from its evil." Ibn 'Abbas reported that when the Messenger saw a man sharpening his knife directly before the sheep to be slaughtered, he asked: "Do you want to kill it many times?"

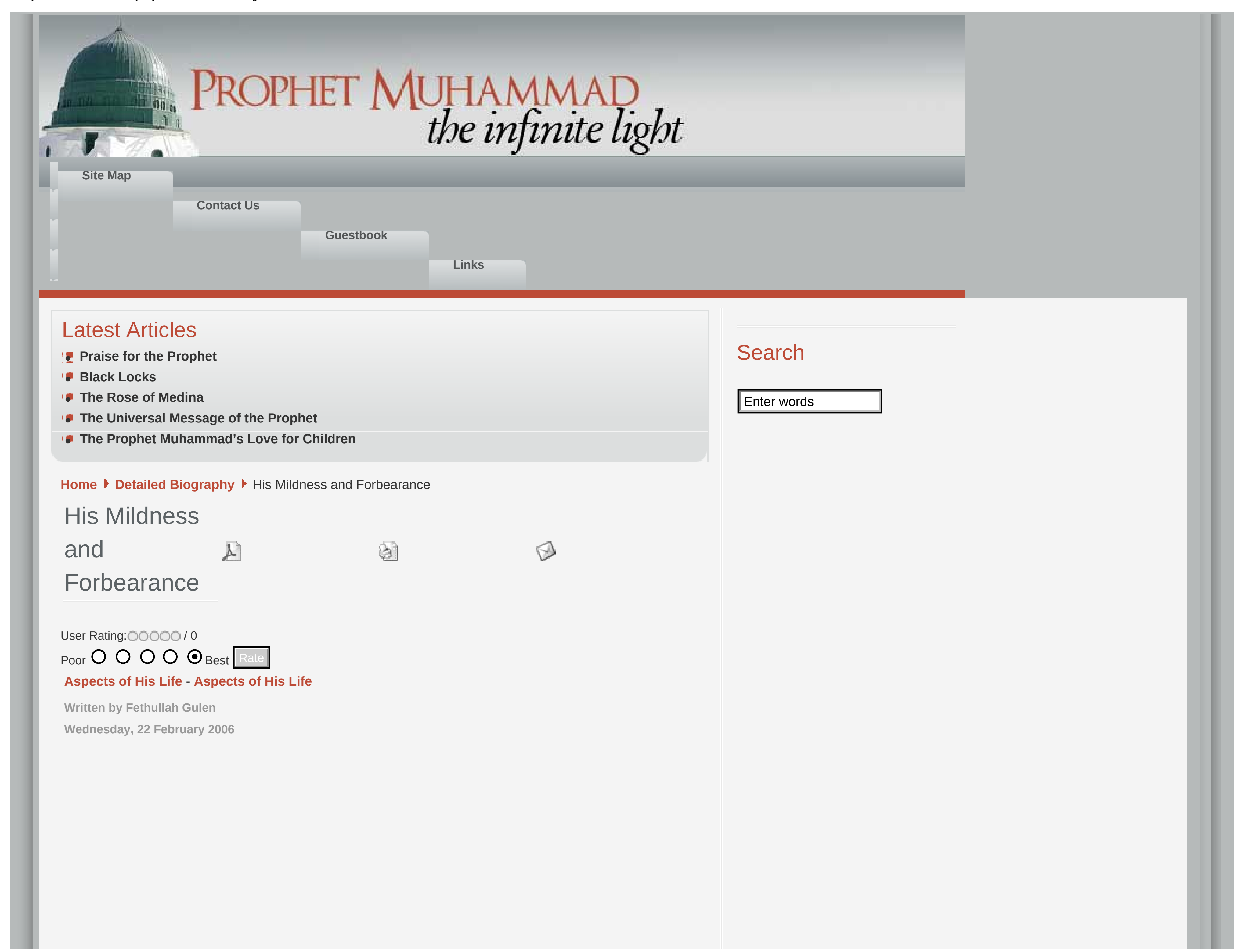
'Abd Allah ibn Ja'far narrates: "The Messenger went to a garden in Madina with a few Companions. A very scrawny camel was in a corner. Seeing the Messenger, it began to cry. The Messenger went to it and, after staying beside it for a while, severely warned the owner to feed it properly."

His love and compassion for creatures differed from that of today's self-proclaimed humanists, for he was sincere and balanced in this regard—a Prophet raised by God, the Creator and Sustainer of all beings, for the guidance and happiness humanity and jinn, and the harmony of existence. As such, he lived for others, and was a mercy for all the worlds, a manifestation of Compassion.

[1] Bukhari, "Anbiya'," 54; Muslim, "Jihad," 104.
[2] Ibn Hisham, Sira, 4:55; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidaya, 4:344.
[3] Muslim, "Fara'iz," 14; Bukhari, "Istiqraz," 11.
[4] Muslim, "Hudud," 17-23; Bukhari, "Hudud," 28.
[5] Bukhari, "Jana'iz," 45; Muslim, "Jana'iz," 12.
[6] Muslim, "Ayman," 31, 33; Ibn Hanbal, 3:447.
[7] Ibn Sa'd, Tabaqat, 1:195;
[8] Abu Dawud, "Adab," 164, "Jihad," 112; Ibn Hanbal, 1:404.
[9] Bukhari, "Jihad," 153; Muslim, "Salam," 147.



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His Mildness and Forbearance

Aspects of His Life - **Aspects of His Life**

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

Mildness is another dimension of his character. He was a bright mirror in which God reflected His Mercy. Mildness is a reflection of compassion. God made His Messenger mild and gentle, thereby allowing him to gain many converts to Islam and overcome numerous obstacles.

After the victory of Badr, the Battle of Uhud was a severe trial for the young Muslim community. Although the Messenger wanted to fight on the outskirts of Madina, most Muslims desired to fight on an open battlefield. When the two armies met at the foot of Mount Uhud, the Messenger positioned 50 archers in 'Aynayn pass and ordered them not to move without his permission, even if they saw that the Muslims had won a decisive victory.

The Muslim army, having only one-third of the men and equipment of the enemy, almost defeated the Makkan polytheists in the initial stage. Seeing the enemy fleeing, these archers forgot the Prophet's command and left their post. Khalid ibn Walid, the Makkan cavalry's commander, saw this and, riding round the mountain, attacked the Muslims from behind. The fleeing enemy soldiers turned back, and caught the Muslims in a cross-fire. They began to lose, more than 70 were martyred, and the Messenger was wounded.

He might have reproached those who had urged him to pursue their desires as well as the archers who had abandoned their post, but he did not. Instead, he showed leniency: It was by the mercy of God that you were gentle to them; if you had been harsh and hard of heart, they would have dispersed from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult with them in the affair. And when you are resolved, then put your trust in God; surely God loves those who put their trust (in Him) (3:159).

This verse shows two prerequisite for leadership: mildness and leniency toward those who make well-intentioned mistakes, and the importance of consultation in public administration.

This mildness and forgiveness was a reflection of God's Names the All-Mild, All-Clement, and All-Forgiving. God does not stop providing for people despite their rebellion or unbelief. While most people disobey Him by indulging in unbelief, by explicitly or implicitly associating partners with Him, or transgressing His Commandments, the sun continues to send them its heat and light, clouds full of rain come to their aid, and the soil never stops feeding them with its fruits and plants. God's Clemency and Forgiveness are reflected through the Messenger's compassion, mildness, and forgiveness.

Like Abraham, whom he used to say that he resembled, The Messenger was mild, imploring, clement, and penitent (11:75), as well as gentle to believers and full of pity and compassion for them (9:128). Abraham was never angry with people, regardless of how much they tormented him. He wished good even for his enemies, and implored God and shed tears in His Presence. Since he was a man of peace and salvation, God made the fire into which he was thrown cool and safe (21:69).

Like him, the Messenger was never angry with anybody because of what they did to him. When his wife 'A'isha was slandered, he did not consider punishing the slanderers even after she was cleared by the Qur'an. Bedouins often behaved impolitely with him, but he did not even frown at them. Although extremely sensitive, he always showed forbearance toward both friend and foe.

For example, while he was distributing the spoils of war after the Battle of Hunayn, Dhu al-Huwaysira objected: "Be just, O Muhammad." This was an unforgivable insult, for the Prophet had been sent to establish justice. Unable to endure such offences, 'Umar demanded permission to kill "that hypocrite" on the spot. But the Messenger only replied: "Who else will show justice if I am not just? If I don't show justice, then I am lost and brought to naught." According to another possible meaning of this expression, he said:

"If I am not just, then, by following me, you people have been lost and brought to naught." In addition, he implied that this man would later take part in a seditious movement. This came true during the caliphate of 'Ali: Dhu al-Huwaysira was found dead among the Kharijites after the Battle of Nahrawan.

Anas ibn Malik related that a Jewess offered a roasted sheep to the Messenger after the conquest of Khaybar. Just before he took the first bite, he stopped and told the others not to eat, saying: "This sheep tells me it has been poisoned." Nevertheless, a Companion named Bishr died immediately after his first bite (taken before the Messenger had spoken). The Messenger sent for the woman and asked her why she had poisoned the meat. She replied: "If you're really a Prophet, the poison won't affect you. If you're not, I wanted to save people from your evil." The Messenger forgave her for her conspiracy to kill him. According to some reports, however, Bishr's relatives demanded that she be punished, and she subsequently was.

Once when the Prophet was going home after talking to his Companions in the mosque, a bedouin pulled him by the collar and said rudely: "O Muhammad! Give me my due! Load up my two camels! For you will load them up with neither your own wealth nor that of your father!" Without showing any sign of being offended, he told others: "Give him what he wants."

Zayd ibn San'an narrates: Before I embraced Islam, the Messenger borrowed some money from me. I went to him to collect my debt before its due time, and insulted him: "O you children of 'Abd al-Muttalib, you are very reluctant to pay your debts!" 'Umar became very angry with me and shouted: "O enemy of God! Were it not for the treaty between us and the Jewish community, I would cut off your head! Speak to the Messenger politely!" However, the Messenger smiled at me and, turning to 'Umar, said: "Pay him, and add 20 gallons to it, because you frightened him."

'Umar relates the rest of the story: We went together. On the way, Zayd said unexpectedly: "'Umar, you were angry with me. But I find in him all the features of the Last Prophet recorded in the Torah, the Old Testament. It contains this verse: His mildness surpasses his anger. The severity of impudence to him increases him only in mildness and forbearance. To test his forbearance, I provoked him deliberately. Now I am convinced that he is the Prophet whose coming the Torah predicted. So, I believe and bear witness that he is the Last Prophet." [1]

This mildness and forbearance was enough for the conversion of Zayd ibn San'an, a Jewish scholar.

The Messenger was extremely meticulous in practicing Islam. Nobody could match his supererogatory prayers. Despite being sinless, he spent more than half the night praying and crying, and sometimes fasted two or three successive days. Every moment he took another step toward the "praised station" set for him by God. He was very tolerant toward others. Not wanting to burden his community, he did not perform the supererogatory prayers in the mosque. When people complained that an imam was prolonging the prayer, the Prophet mounted the pulpit and said: "O people! You cause people to dread the prayer. When you lead a prayer, don't prolong it, for others are sick or old or in urgent need." Once his congregation complained about Mu'adh ibn Jabal, saying he prolonged the night prayer. The Prophet's love for Mu'adh did not stop him asking three times if he was a trouble-maker. [2]

The Messenger's mildness and forbearance captured hearts and preserved Muslim unity. As stated in the Qur'an, if he had been harsh and hard-hearted, people would have abandoned him. But those who saw him and listened to him were so endowed with Divine manifestations that they became saints. For example, Khalid ibn Walid was the Qurayshi general who caused the Muslims to experience a reverse at Uhud. However, when he was not included in the army that set out on the day after his conversion, he was so upset that he wept.

Quote

“Even, if it were not for reasons for the fulfilment of those countless requests, like Mercy, Grace, Wisdom, and Justice, a single of that Being's prayers would have been sufficient for the construction of Paradise, the creation of which is as easy for Divine Power as the creation of the spring.”
-Bediüzzaman Said Nursi

Like Khalid, Ikrima and 'Amr ibn al-'As were among those who did great harm to the Messenger and the Muslims. After their conversions, each became a sword of Islam drawn against unbelievers. Ibn Hisham, Abu Jahl's brother, converted to Islam shortly before the Messenger passed away. He was such a sincere Muslim that just before he was martyred at Yarmuk, he did not drink the water that Hudayfa al-'Adawi offered him. Rather, he asked that it be given to nearby wounded fellow Muslim groaning for water. He died, having preferred a fellow Muslim over himself.

Such people attained high ranks in the enlightening atmosphere of the Messenger. They became his Companions, regarded and respected as the most virtuous people after the Prophets by almost all Muslims since the earliest days of Islam. Explaining their greatness, Said Nursi, the great twentieth-century Muslim revivalist, says: I wondered why even the greatest saints like Muhyi al-Din ibn al-'Arabi could not attain the rank of the Companions. One day God enabled me to perform in prayer a prostration that I could never repeat. I concluded that it is impossible to attain the Companions' ranks, for all of their prostrations were like that in meaning and merit.

The Messenger brought up the Companions. Their greatness is shown in the fact that despite their small numbers, they successfully conveyed Islam to the furthest reaches of Asia and Africa within a few decades. In those areas, Islam became so deeply rooted that despite the concerted efforts undertaken by the superpowers of each era to extinguish Islam, it continues to gain new momentum and represents the only realistic alternative for human salvation. The Companions were transformed from their wretched pre-Islamic state to being guides and teachers of a considerable part of humanity until the Last Day, the vanguard of the most magnificent civilization in history.

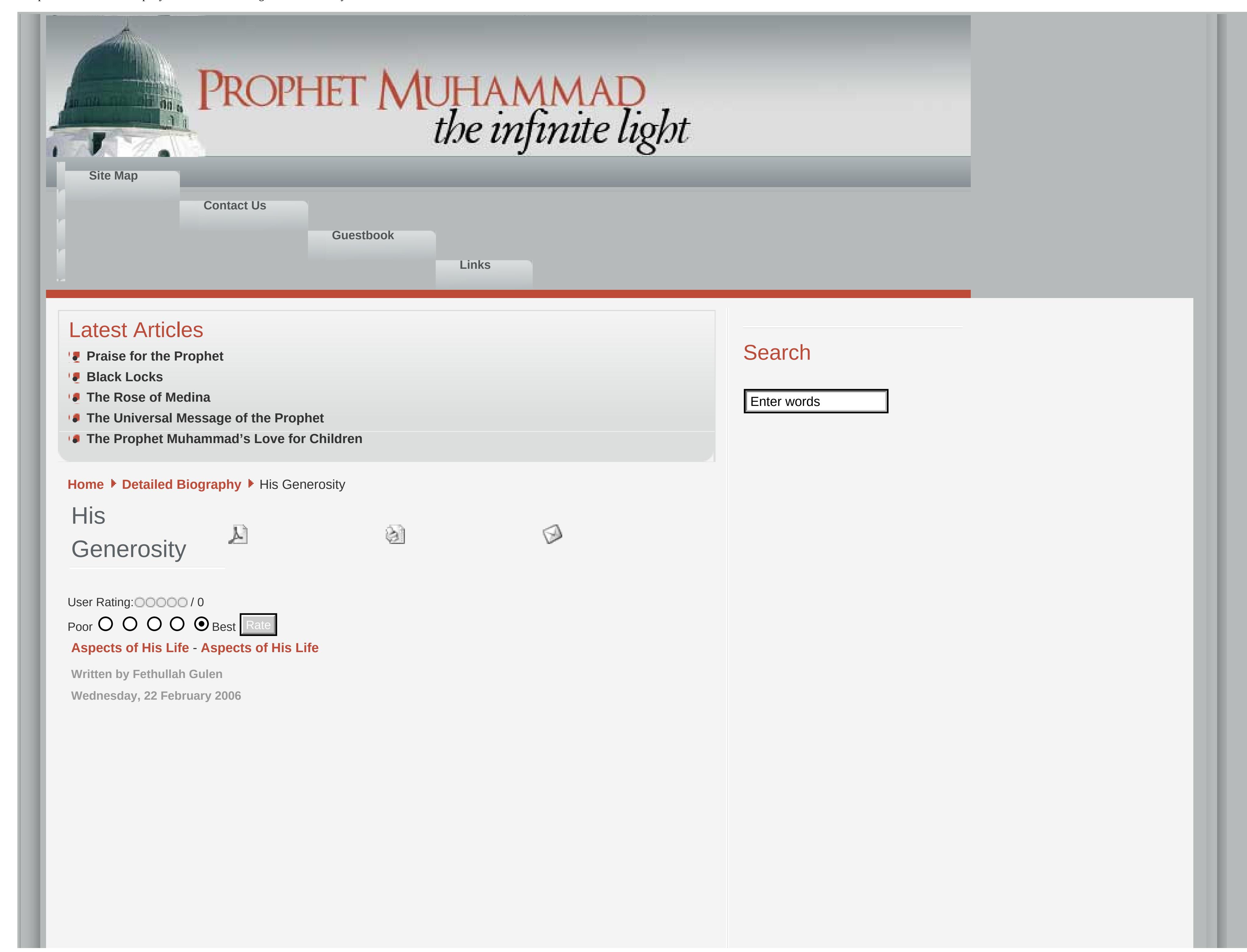
In addition, the Messenger was absolutely balanced. His universal compassion did not prevent him from executing Divine justice, and his mildness and forbearance kept him from breaching any Islamic rule or humiliating himself. For example, during a military campaign Usama ibn Zayd threw an enemy soldier to the ground. When he was about to kill him, the man declared his belief in Islam. Judging this to be the result of a fear of imminent death, Usama killed him. When informed of the incident, the Messenger reprimanded Usama severely: "Did you cleave his heart open and see (if what you suspected is true)?" He repeated this so many times that Usama said later: "I wished I had not yet become a Muslim on the day I was scolded so severely."

Likewise, once Abu Dharr got so angry with Bilal that he insulted him: "You son of a black woman!" Bilal came to the Messenger and reported the incident in tears. The Messenger reproached Abu Dharr: "Do you still have a sign of Jahiliya?" Full of repentance, Abu Dharr lay on the ground and said: "I won't raise my head (meaning he wouldn't get up) unless Bilal put his foot on it to pass over it." Bilal forgave him, and they were reconciled. Such was the brotherhood and humanity Islam created between once-savage people.

[1] Suyuti, al-Khasa'is, 1:26; Ibn Hajar, al-Isaba, 1:566.
[2] Muslim, "Salat," 179; Nasa'i, "Iftitah," 71; Bukhari, "Adab," 74.

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Written by Fethullah Gulen
Wednesday, 22 February 2006
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The Messenger is the most polished mirror in which God's Names and Attributes are reflected to the highest degree. As the perfect manifestation of these Names and Attributes, an embodiment of the Qur'an and Islam, he is the greatest and most decisive and comprehensive proof of God's Existence and Unity, and of the truth of Islam and the Qur'an. Those who saw him remembered God automatically. Each of his virtues reflected a Name or Attribute of God, and is a proof of his Prophethood. Like his mildness and forbearance, his generosity is another dimension of his excellent, matchless personality, a reflection and proof of his Prophethood.

The people of Arabia were renowned for their generosity even in pre-Islamic times. When we look at that era's poetry, we see that the Arabs were proud of their generosity. However, their generosity was not for the sake of God or for an altruistic motive; rather, it was the cause of self-pride. But the Messenger's generosity was purely for God's sake. He never mentioned, and did not like to have mentioned, it. When a poet praised him for his generosity, he attributed whatever good he had or did to God. He never attributed his virtues and good deeds to himself.

The Messenger liked to distribute whatever he had. He engaged in trade until his Prophethood, and had considerable wealth. Afterwards, he and his wealthy wife Khadija spent everything in the way of God. When Khadija died, there was no money for her burial shroud. The Messenger had to borrow money to bury his own wife, the first person to embrace Islam and its first supporter. [1]

If the Messenger had desired, he could have been the richest man in Makka. But he rejected such offers without a second thought. Although God mandated that one-fifth of all war spoils should be at the Messenger's free disposal, he never spent it on himself or his family. He and his family lived austerely and survived on scanty provisions, for he always gave preference to others. For example, his share of the spoils of Hunayn was of 40,000 sheep, 24,000 camels, and 16 tons of silver. Safwan ibn Umayya, from whom the Messenger had borrowed some weapons, gazed upon the spoils with greed and bewilderment. Aware of this, the Messenger gave him as many camels as he wanted. Astounded with such generosity, Safwan ran to his people and announced: "O my people! Accept Islam without hesitation, for Muhammad gives in such a way that only one who has no fear of poverty and relies fully on God can give!" Such generosity was enough to guide Safwan and his people, who had been among the bitterest enemies of Islam until just before that day, to the truth. [2]

The Messenger regarded himself a traveler in this world. Once he said: "What connection do I have with this world? I am like a traveler who takes shade under a tree and then continues on his way." According to him, the world is like a tree under which people are shaded. No one can live forever, so people must prepare here for the second part of the journey, which will end either in Paradise or Hell.

The Messenger was sent to guide people to truth. Therefore, he spent his life and his possessions to this end. Once 'Umar saw him lying on a rough mat and wept. When the Messenger asked him why he was weeping, 'Umar replied: "O Messenger of God, while kings sleep in soft feather beds, you lie on a rough mat. You are the Messenger of God, and as such deserve an easy life more than anyone else." The Messenger answered: "Don't you agree that the luxuries of the world should be theirs, and that those of the Hereafter should be ours?" [3]

Islam does not approve of monastic life. It came to secure justice and human well-being, but warns against over-indulgence. Thus many Muslims have chosen an ascetic life. Although individual Muslims generally became rich after the Messenger passed away, others like Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Ali preferred an austere life. This was partly because they felt the need to live as the poorest of their people, and partly because they strictly followed the Prophet's example. During his caliphate, Abu Bakr was offered a glass of cold

water to break his fast during Ramadan. He brought the glass to his lips and suddenly began to weep. When asked why, he answered: "One day, the Messenger drank such a glass of cold water offered to him and wept. He said that God says: 'On that day, you will be questioned concerning every bounty.' We will be questioned about this water. I remembered that and wept." [4]

In the early days of his Caliphate, Abu Bakr earned his living by milking a woman's sheep. Some time later, he was given a small salary. While on his death-bed, he gave a pitcher to those around him and asked them to give it to the new caliph after his death. 'Umar succeeded him and, when he broke the pitcher, some coins came out, together with the following letter: "I lived according to the living standards of the poorest of Madina, and put in this pitcher the amount left of my salary. Therefore, these coins belong to the public treasury and must be returned there." On reading the letter, 'Umar wept and remarked: "O Abu Bakr, you have left an unbearable burden on your successors."

The Messenger was, in the words of Anas, "the most comely and generous person." Jabir ibn Samura reports: "Once we were sitting in the mosque, and a full moon was shining above us. The Messenger entered. I looked first at the moon and then at his face. I swear by God that the Messenger's face was brighter than the moon." [5]

The Messenger never refused anyone and, as Farazdak said, only said the word "no" when reciting the profession of faith while praying. Once, a bedouin came and asked the Messenger for something. The Messenger complied with his request. The bedouin continued to ask, and the Messenger continued to give until he had nothing left. When the bedouin asked again, he promised that he would give it to him when he had it. Angered by such rudeness, 'Umar said to the Messenger: "You were asked and you gave. Again you were asked and you gave, until you were asked once more and you promised!" 'Umar meant that the Messenger should not make things so difficult for himself. The Messenger did not approve of 'Umar's words. 'Abd Allah ibn Hudafa al-Sahmi stood up and said: "O Messenger, give without fear that the Owner of the Seat of Honor will make you poor!' Pleased with such words, the Messenger declared: "I was commanded to do so!"

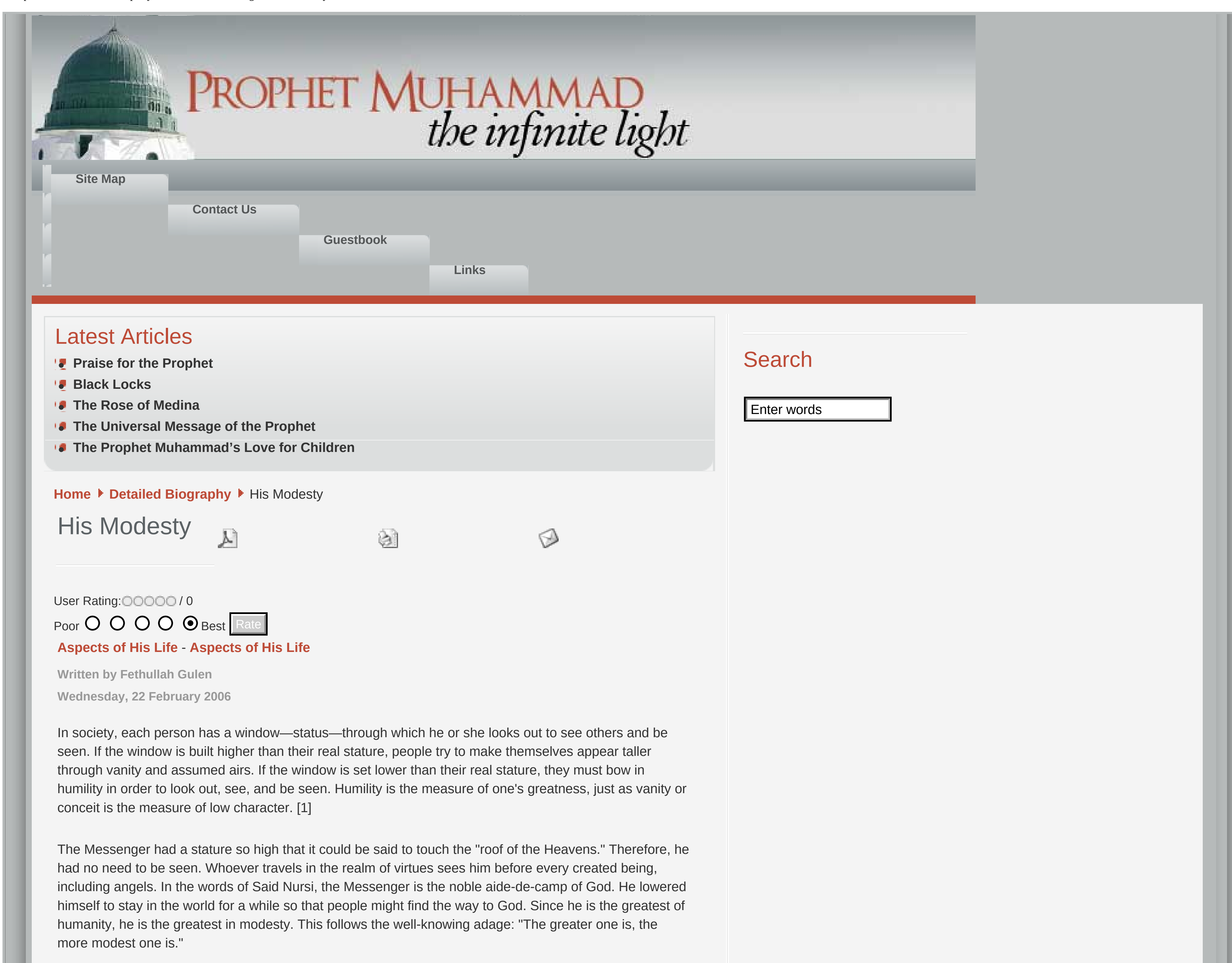
He never refused a request, for it was he who said: "The generous are near to God, Paradise, and people, but distant from the Fire. The miserly are distant from God, Paradise, and people, but near to the Fire," and: "O people! Surely God has chosen for you Islam as religion. Improve your practice of it through generosity and good manners." His mercifulness rose up as moisture into the sky, and then rained as generosity so that hardened hearts would be fertile enough to grow "good trees whose roots are firm and whose branches are in the Heavens, and which yield their fruits every season by the leave of their Master."

[1] Ibn Kathir, al-Bidaya, 3:158–9.
[2] Ibn Hisham, 4:135; Ibn Hajar, al-Isaba, 2:187; Muslim, "Fada'il," 57.
[3] Bukhari, "Tafsir," 2; Muslim, "Talaq," 31.
[4] Muslim, "Ashriba," 140; Abu Nu'aym, "Hilya," 1:30.
[5] Suyuti, al-Khasa'is, 1:123; Hindi, Kanz al-'Ummal, 7:168.

Quote

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-EDWARD GIBBON and SIMON OCKLEY, HISTORY OF THE SAR

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His Modesty

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

In society, each person has a window—status—through which he or she looks out to see others and be seen. If the window is built higher than their real stature, people try to make themselves appear taller through vanity and assumed airs. If the window is set lower than their real stature, they must bow in humility in order to look out, see, and be seen. Humility is the measure of one's greatness, just as vanity or conceit is the measure of low character. [1]

The Messenger had a stature so high that it could be said to touch the "roof of the Heavens." Therefore, he had no need to be seen. Whoever travels in the realm of virtues sees him before every created being, including angels. In the words of Said Nursi, the Messenger is the noble aide-de-camp of God. He lowered himself to stay in the world for a while so that people might find the way to God. Since he is the greatest of humanity, he is the greatest in modesty. This follows the well-knowing adage: "The greater one is, the more modest one is."

The Messenger never regarded himself as greater than anybody else. The only way he could be distinguished from his Companions was by his radiant face and attractive person. He lived and dressed like the poorest people and sat and ate with them, just as he did with slaves and servants. Once a woman saw him eating and remarked: "He eats like a slave." The Messenger replied: "Could there be a better slave than me? I am a slave of God." [2]

One time when he was serving his friends, a bedouin came in and shouted: "Who is the master of this people?" The Messenger answered in such a way that he introduced himself while expressing a substantial principle of Islamic leadership and public administration: "The master of the people is the one who serves them." Ali says that among people the Messenger was one of them. When he and Abu Bakr reached Quba while emigrating to Madina, some Madinese who did not know what the Prophet looked like tried to kiss Abu Bakr's hands. The only external sign distinguishing one man from the other was that Abu Bakr seemed older than the Messenger.

While the Muslims were building their mosque in Madina, the Prophet carried two sun-dried bricks; everyone else carried one. [3] While digging the trench to defend Madina, the Companions bound a stone around their stomachs to quell their hunger; the Messenger bound two. When a man seeing him for the first time began trembling out of fear, because he found the Prophet's appearance so awe-inspiring, the Messenger calmed him: "Brother, don't be afraid. I am a man, like you, whose mother used to eat dry bread." [4] Another time, an insane woman pulled him by the hand and said: "Come with me and do my housework." He complied with her request. [5] 'A'isha reported that the Messenger patched his clothes, repaired his shoes, and helped his wives with the housework. [6]

Although his modesty elevated him to the highest rank, he regarded himself as an ordinary servant of God: "No one enters Paradise because of his or her deeds." When asked if this was true for him as well, he replied that he could enter Paradise only through the Mercy of God.

His Companions always asked for his advice or permission before any action. Once 'Umar asked his permission to go for the minor pilgrimage. The Messenger allowed this, and even asked 'Umar to include him in his supplications. 'Umar rejoiced so much that later he would say: "If the worlds had been granted to me that day, I wouldn't have felt the same happiness."

Humility was one of the Prophet's greatest qualities. As he attained a higher rank each day, he increased in humility and servanthood to God. His servanthood is prior to his Messengership, as seen in the declaration of faith: "I bear witness that there is no god but God; I also bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger." He preferred being a Prophet-slave to being a Prophet-king.

One day, while sitting with Archangel Gabriel, the Messenger mentioned that he had not eaten for several days. As soon as he said this, another angel appeared and asked: "O Messenger of God, God greets you and asks if you wish to be a Prophet-king or a Prophet-slave?" Gabriel advised him to be humble toward his Master. As humility was a fundamental part of his character, the Messenger replied: "I wish to be a Prophet-slave." [7] God praises his servanthood and mentions him as a servant in several verses: When the servant of God stood up in prayer to Him, they (the jinn) were well nigh upon him in swarms (to watch his prayer) (72:19), and: If you are in doubt concerning that which We have sent down on Our servant, then bring a sura of the like thereof, and call your witnesses beside God if you are truthful (2:23).

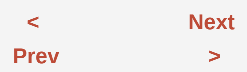
After Khadija and Abu Talib died, the Messenger became convinced that he could no longer expect any victory or security in Makka. So before things became too critical, he sought a new base in Ta'if. As the townspeople proved to be quite hostile, he felt that he had no support and protection. But then God

manifested His Mercy and honored him with the Ascension, raising him to His Presence. While narrating this incident, God mentions him as His servant to show that he deserves Ascension through his servanthood: Glory be to him, Who carried His servant by night from the Holy Mosque to the Furthest Mosque, the precincts of which We have blessed, that We might show him some of Our signs. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing (17:1).

Humility is the most important aspect of the Messenger's servanthood. He declared: "God exalts the humble and abases the haughty." 'Ali describes the Messenger in the following terms:

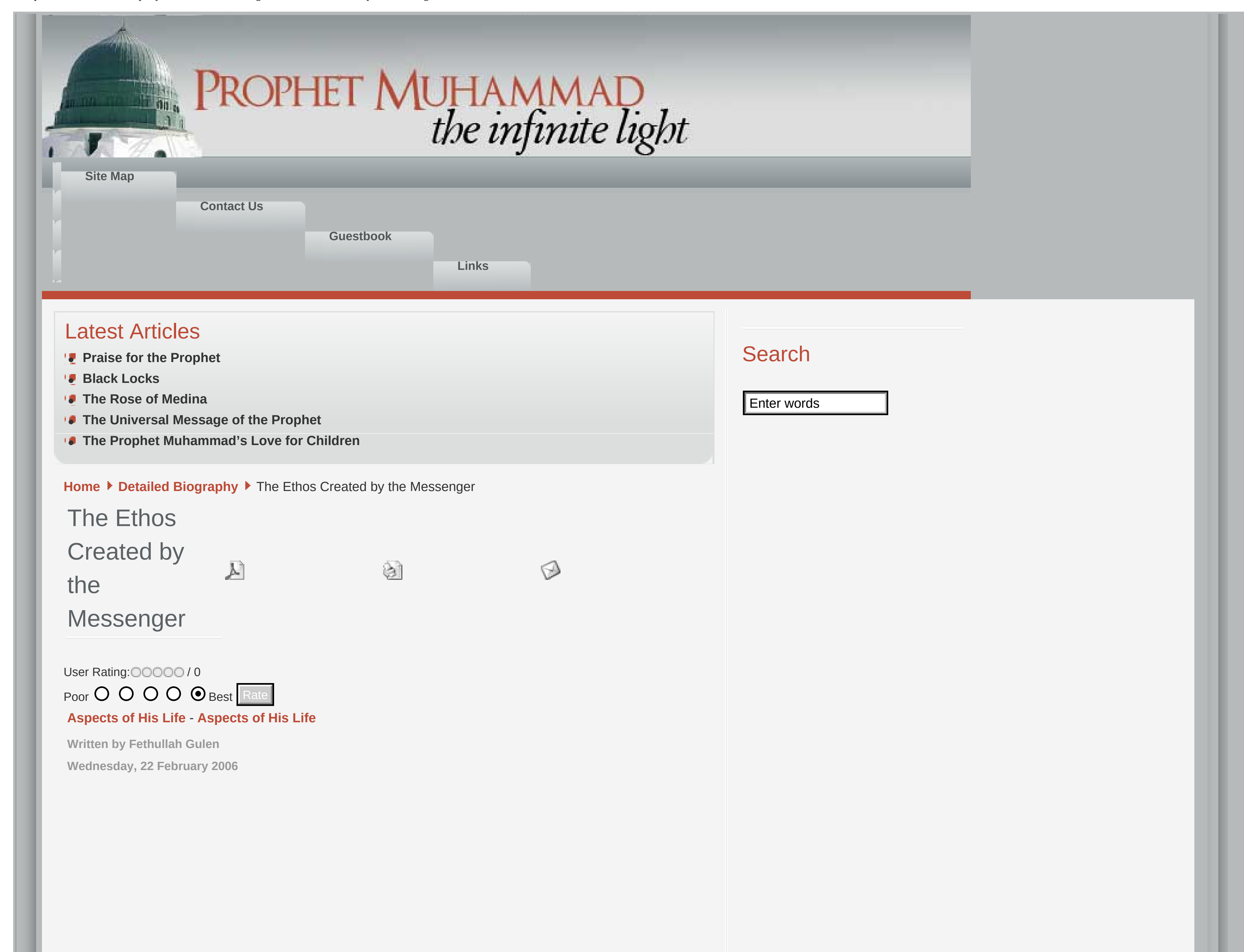
He was the most generous person in giving, and the mildest and the foremost in patience and perseverance. He was the most truthful in speech, the most amiable and congenial in companionship, and the noblest of them in family. Whoever sees him first is stricken by awe, but whoever knows him closely is deeply attracted to him. Whoever attempts to describe him says: 'I have never seen the like of him.'

[1] Said Nursi, Letters 2,315.
[2] Haythami, Majma', 9:21.
[3] Bukhari, 1:111; Muslim, 2:65; Semhudi, Wafa', 1:237; Ibn Sa'd, 1: 240.
[4] Ibn Maja, "At'ýma," 30; Haythami, 9:20.
[5] Qadi 'Iyad, al-Shifa', 1:131, 133.
[6] Tirmidhi, Shama'il, 78; Ibn Hanbal, 6:256.
[7] Ibn Hanbal, 2:231; Haythami, 9:18.
[8] Hindi, Kanz al-'Ummal, 3:113; Haythami, 10:325.



Quote

“It is impossible for anyone who studies the life and character of the great Prophet of Arabia, who knows how he taught and how he lived, to feel anything but reverence for that mighty Prophet, one of the great messengers of the Supreme. And although in what I put to you I shall say many things which may be familiar to many, yet I myself feel whenever I re-read them, a new way of admiration, a new sense of reverence for that mighty Arabian teacher.”
-Annie Besant, THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF MUHAMMAD,



The Ethos Created by the Messenger

Written by Fethullah Gulen

Wednesday, 22 February 2006

It is difficult for us to understand Prophet Muhammad fully. As we tend to compartmentalize the universe, life, and humanity itself, we have no unitary vision. However, Prophet Muhammad perfectly combined a philosopher's intellect, a commander valor, a scientist's genius, a sage's wisdom, a statesman's insight and administrative ability, a Sufi master's spiritual profundity, and a scholar's knowledge in his own person. Philosophers produce students, not followers; social or revolutionary leaders make followers, not complete people; Sufi masters make "lords of submission," not active fighters or intellectuals. But in Prophet Muhammad we find the characteristics of a philosopher, a revolutionary leader, a warrior and statesman, and a Sufi master. His school is one of the intellect and thought, revolution, submission and discipline, and goodness, beauty, ecstasy, and movement.

Prophet Muhammad transformed crude, ignorant, savage, and obstinate desert Arabs into an army of skilled fighters, a community of sincere devotees of a sublime cause, a society of gentleness and compassion, an assembly of sainthood, and a host of intellectuals and scholars. Nowhere else do we see such fervor and ardor combined with gentleness, kindness, sincerity, and compassion. This is a characteristic unique to the Muslim community, one that has been visible since its earliest days.

The "Garden" of Muhammad. Islam, the school of Prophet Muhammad, has been a "garden" rich in every kind of "flower." Like cascading water, God has brought forth from it such majestic people as Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, 'Ali, 'Umar ibn Abd al-'Aziz, Mahdi al-'Abbasi, Harun al-Rashid, Alp Arslan, Mehmed the Conqueror, Selim, and Sulayman. These were not only statesmen of the highest caliber and invincible commanders, but also men of profound spirituality, deep knowledge, oration, and literature.

The blessed, pure climate of the Messenger produced invincible generals. Among the first generation we see such military geniuses as Khalid, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, Abu 'Ubayda, Shurahbil ibn Hasana, and A'la al-Khadrami. They were succeeded by such brilliant generals as Tariq ibn Ziyad and 'Uqba ibn Nafi, both of whom combined military genius with human tenderness and religious conviction and devotion.

When 'Uqba, the conqueror of North Africa, reached the Atlantic Ocean, 2,000 miles away from Arabia, he cried out: "And now, God, take my soul! If this sea didn't stretch out before me, I would convey Your holy Name across it to other lands!" We can hardly imagine Alexander the "Great" thinking such thoughts as he set out for Persia. Yet as conquerors, the two men achieved comparable feats. 'Uqba's idealism and his "possibility" with respect to the Divine Will would be transmuted into irresistible action in this world. Alexander's empire crashed after his death; the lands 'Uqba conquered still retain Islam as their dominant worldview, creed, and life-style 14 centuries later, despite attempts to change this reality.

Tariq was a victorious commander, not only when he defeated the 90,000-man Spanish army with a handful of self-sacrificing, valiant men, but also when he stood before the king's treasure and said: "Be careful, Tariq! You were a slave yesterday. Today you are a victorious commander. And tomorrow you will be under the earth." Yavuz Selim, an Ottoman Sultan who regarded the world as too small for two rulers, was truly victorious when he crowned some kings and dethroned others, and also when he silently entered Istanbul at bedtime, after conquering Syria and Egypt, to avoid the people's enthusiastic welcome. He also was victorious when he ordered that the robe soiled by his teacher's horse be placed over his coffin because of its sanctity—it had been "soiled" by the horse of a scholar.

During the rapid conquests after the Prophet, many conquered people were distributed among the Muslim families. Those emancipated slaves eventually became the foremost religious scholars: Hasan ibn Hasan al-Basri (Basra); 'Ata ibn Rabah, Mujahid, Sa'id ibn Jubayr, and Sulayman ibn Yasar (Makka); Zayd ibn Aslam, Muhammad ibn al-Munkadir, and Nafi' ibn Abi Nujayh (Madina); 'Alqama ibn Qays al-Nakha'i, Aswad ibn Yazid, Hammad, and Abu Hanifa Nu'man ibn Thabit (Kufa); Tawus and ibn Munabbih (Yemen);

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'Ata ibn 'Abd Allah al-Khorasani (Khorasan); and Maqhul (Damascus). They all opened as splendid, sweet-smelling flowers in the garden of Muhammad. They established the Islamic legal code and brought up thousands of jurists, who wrote and complied volumes that are still valued as legal references.

One of these jurists, Imam Abu Hanifa, founded the Hanafi legal school, which has hundreds of millions of followers today. He brought up such great scholars as Imam Abu Yusuf, Imam Zufar, and Imam Muhammad Hasan al-Shaybani, who taught Imam Muhammed Idris al-Shafi'i. The notes Abu Hanifa dictated to Imam al-Shaybani were expounded centuries later by Imam Sarakhsi (the "Sun of Imams") in the 30-volume work Al-Mabsut. Imam Shafi'i, who established the methodological principles of Islamic law, is regarded as reviver or renewer (mujaddid) of religious sciences. However, when his students told Imam Sarakhsi that Imam Shafi'i had memorized 300 fascicles of the Prophetic Traditions, the latter answered: "He had the zakat (one-fortieth) of the Traditions in my memory.'

Imam Shafi'i, Abu Hanifa, Imam Malik, or Ahmad ibn Hanbal, and so many others, were brought up in the school of Prophet Muhammad.

And then there are such Qur'anic interpreters as Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, Ibn Kathir, Imam Suyuti, Allama Hamdi Yazir, and Sayyid Qutb. In addition, there are such famous hadith collectors as Imam Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, Ibn Ma'ja, Nasa'i, Ibn Hanbal, Bayhaqi, Darimi, Daraqutni, Sayf al-Din al-Iraqi, Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, and many others. They are all ever-shining stars in the luminous sky of Islamic sciences. All received their light from Prophet Muhammad.

According to Islam, God created humanity on the best pattern, as the most universal and all-embracing theater of Divine Names and Attributes. But people, because of their heedlessness, can fall to the lowest levels. Sufism, the inner dimension of Islam, leads people to perfection or enables them to reacquire their primordial angelic state. Islam has produced countless saints. As it never separated our metaphysical quest or gnosis from the study of nature, many practicing Sufis were also scientists. Such leading saints as 'Abd al Qadir al-Jilani, Shah Naqshband, Ma'ruf al-Karkhi, Hasan Shazili, Ahmad Badawi, Shaykh al-Harrani, Ja'far al-Sadiq, Junayd al-Baghdadi, Bayazid al-Bistami, Muhy al-Din al-'Arabi, and Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi have illumined the way to truth and trained others to purify their selves.

Being embodiments of sincerity, Divine love, and pure intention, Sufi masters became the motivating factor and the source of power behind the Islamic conquests and the subsequent Islamization of those lands. Figures like Imam Ghazali, Imam Rabbani, and Bediuzzaman Said Nursi are revivers or renewers of the highest degree, and combined in themselves the enlightenment of sages, the knowledge of religious scholars, and the spirituality of great saints.

Islam is the middle way. Its elaborate hierarchy of knowledge is integrated by the principle of Divine Unity (tawhid). There are juridical, social and theological sciences, as well as metaphysical ones, all deriving their principles from the Qur'an. Over time, Muslims developed elaborate philosophical, natural, and mathematical sciences, each of which has its source in a Beautiful Name of God. For example, medicine depends on the Name All-Healing; geometry and engineering on the Names All-Just and All-Determiner, and All-Shaper and All-Harmonizing; philosophy reflects the Name All-Wise.

Each level of knowledge views nature in a particular light. Jurists and theologians see it as the background for human action; philosophers and scientists see it as a domain to be analyzed and understood; and metaphysicians consider it the object of contemplation and the mirror reflecting suprasensible realities. The Author of Nature has inscribed His Wisdom upon every leaf and stone, on every atom and particle, and has created the world of nature in such a way that every phenomenon is a sign (aya) singing the glory of His

Quote

“. He solves and expounds the strange riddle of the mystery of the world's creation; he discovers and solves the abstruse talisman which is the mystery of the universe; and he provides convincing and satisfying answers to the three awesome and difficult questions that are asked of al1 beings and have always bewildered and occupied minds: "Where do you come from? What are you doing here? Where are you going?"”

-Bediuzzaman Said Nursi

Oneness.

Islam has maintained an intimate connection between science and Islamic studies. As a result, the traditional education of Islamic scientists, particularly in the early cneturies of Islam, was broad enough to comprise most of the sciences of that time. In later life, each scientist's aptitude and interest would cause him or her to become an expert and specialist in one or more sciences.

Universities, libraries, observatories, and other scientific institutions played a major role in the continuing vitality of Islamic science. These, together with students who would travel hundreds of miles to study under acknowledged scholars, ensured that the whole corpus of knowledge was kept intact and transmitted from one place to another and from one generation to the next. This knowledge did not remain static; rather, it continued to expand and enrich itself. Today, there are hundreds of thousands of Islamic (mainly in Arabic) manuscripts in the world's libraries, a large number of which deal with scientific subjects. [1]

For example, Abu Yusuf Yaqub al-Kindi (the "Philosopher of the Arabs") wrote on philosophy, mineralogy, metallurgy, geology, physics, and medicine, among other subjects, and was an accomplished physician. Ibn al-Haytham was a leading Muslim mathematician and, without doubt, the greatest physicist. We know the names of over 100 of his works. Some 19 of them, dealing with mathematics, astronomy, and physics, have been studied by modern scholars. His work exercised a profound influence on later scholars, both in the Muslim world and in the West, where he was known Alhazen. One of his works on optics was translated into Latin in 1572.

Abu al-Rayhan al-Biruni was one of the greatest scholars of medieval Islam, and certainly the most original and profound. He was equally well-versed in mathematics, astronomy, the physical and natural sciences, and also distinguished himself as a geographer and historian, a chronologist and linguist, and as an impartial observer of customs and creeds. Such figures as al-Kharizmi (mathematics), Ibn Shatir (astronomy), al-Khazini (physics), Jabir ibn Hayyan (medicine) are remembered even today. Andalucia (Muslim Spain) was the main center from which the West acquired knowledge and enlightenment for centuries.

Islam founded a most brilliant civilization. This should not be considered surprising, for the Qur'an begins with the injunction: Read: In the Name of Your Master Who creates (96:1). The Qur'an told people to read when there was very little to read and most people were illiterate. What we understand from this apparent paradox is that humanity is to "read" the universe itself as the "Book of Creation." Its counterpart is the Qur'an, a book of letters and words. We are to observe the universe, perceive its meaning and content, and through those activities gain a deeper perception of the beauty and splendor of the Creator's system and the infinitude of His Might. Thus we are obliged to penetrate into the universe's manifold meanings, discover the Divine laws of nature, and establish a world in which science and faith complement each other. All of this will enable us to attain true bliss in both worlds.

In obedience to the Qur'an's injunctions and the Prophet's example, Muslims studied the Book of Divine Revelation (the Qur'an) and the Book of Creation (the universe) and eventually erected a magnificent civilization. Scholars from all over Europe benefited from the centers of higher learning located in Damascus, Bukhara, Baghdad, Cairo, Faz, Qairwan, Zeituna, Cordoba, Sicily, Isfahan, Delhi and other great Islamic cities. Historians liken the Muslim world of the medieval ages, dark for Europe but golden and luminous for Muslims, to a beehive. Roads were full of students, scientists, and scholars traveling from one center of learning to another.

For the first 5 centuries of its existence, the realm of Islam was a most civilized and progressive area.

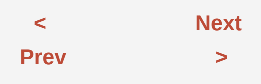
Studded with splendid cities, gracious mosques, and quiet universities, the Muslim East offered a striking contrast to the Christian West, which was sunk in the Dark Ages. Even after the disastrous Mongol invasions and Crusades of the thirteenth century ce and onwards, it displayed vigor and remained for ahead of the West.

Although Islam ruled two-thirds of the known civilized world for at least 11 centuries, laziness and negligence of what was going on beyond its borders caused it to decay. However, it must be pointed out clearly that only Islamic civilization decayed—not Islam. Military victories and superiority, which continued into the eighteenth century, encouraged Muslims to rest on their laurels and neglect further scientific research. They abandoned themselves to living their own lives, and recited the Qur'an without studying its deeper meanings. Meanwhile, Europe made great advances in sciences, which they had borrowed from the Muslims.

What we call "sciences" are, in reality, languages of the Divine Book of Creation (another aspect of Islam). Those who ignore this book are doomed to failure in this world. When the Muslims began to ignore it, it was only a matter of time before they would be dominated by some external force. In this case, that external force was Europe. European cruelty, oppression, and imperialism also contributed greatly to this result.

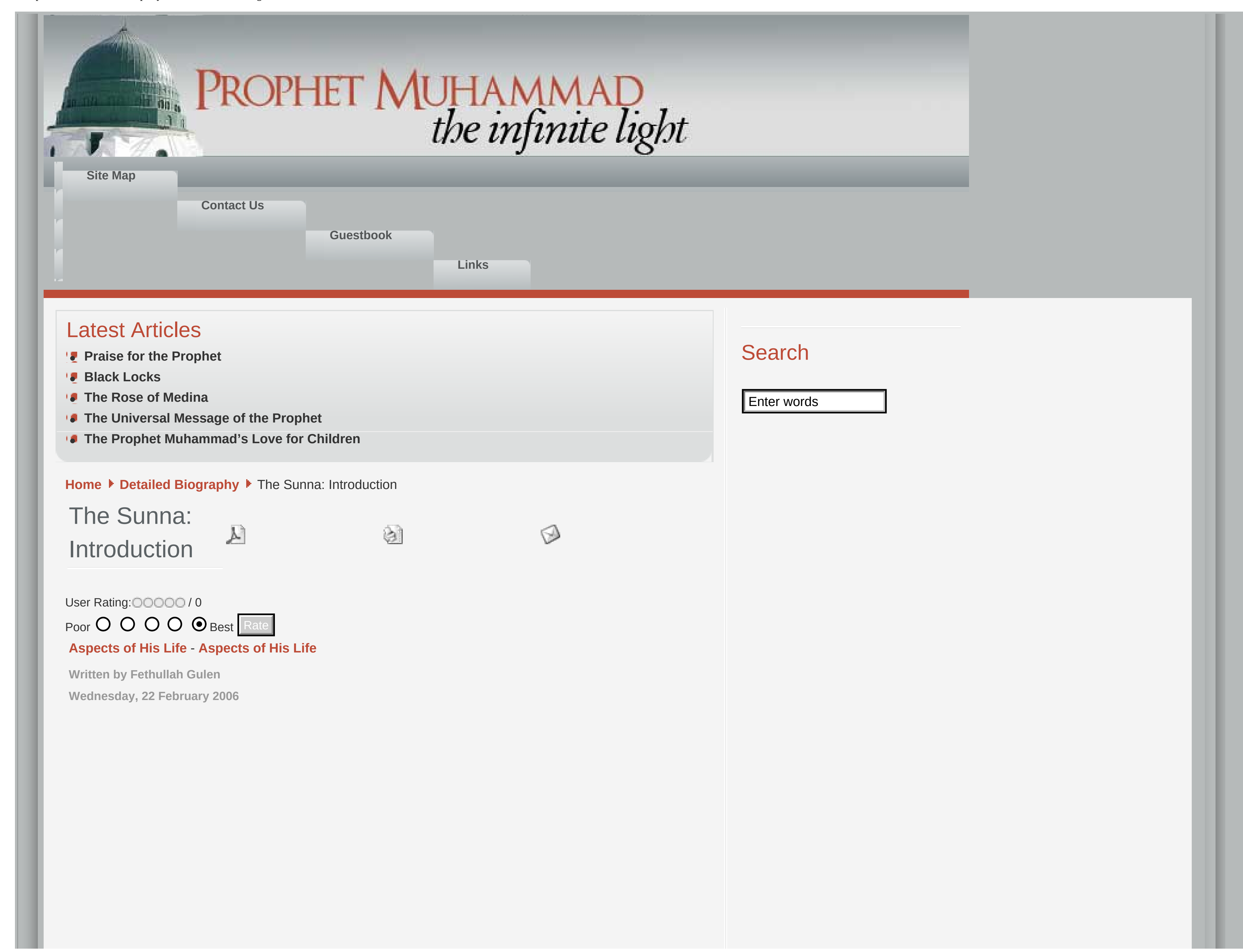
The present modern civilization cannot last for long, for it is materialistic and cannot satisfy humanity's perennial needs. Such Western sociologists as Oswald Spengler have predicted its collapse on the grounds that it is against human nature and values. On the other hand, Islam has been around for 14 centuries. In addition, it is fully capable of establishing the bright world of the future on the firm foundation of its creed, ethics, spirituality, and morality, as well as its legal, social and economic structures.

[1] George Sarton, in his monumental Introduction to the History of Science, divided his work into chronological chapters, naming each chapter after the most eminent scientist of that period. From the middle of the second century ah (eight century ce) to the middle of the fifth century ah (eleventh century ce), each fifty-year period carries the name of a Muslim scientist. Thus we have the "Time of al-Kharizmi," the "Time of al-Biruni," and so on. These chapters also contain the names of many other important Islamic scientists and their main works. (Tr.)



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Written by Fethullah Gulen
Wednesday, 22 February 2006
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The science of Hadith deals with Prophet Muhammad's life, especially his words and actions, and the actions he approved of in others. In this section, we will restrict ourselves to his own words and actions. These words and their meanings are his alone, for they were not included in the Qur'an, the Recited Revelation and whose meaning and wording belong to God exclusively. His actions include those whose rule and authority we are obliged to follow as laws, and his personal affairs, which are a source of spiritual reward and blessing if followed.

The science of fiqh (Islamic law) does not concern itself with the Prophet's personal affairs. The fuqaha' (jurists) consider that if those affairs touch upon the voluntary and purposed acts, they should be dealt with under the relevant law. However, if they are matters of the Prophet's personal likes and dislikes, which are not a basis for legislation, they are of no concern to the fuqaha'. According to the muhaddithun (scholars of Hadith, or Traditionists), everything related to the Messenger is included in the meaning of Hadith (Tradition) and concerns the Traditionists.

The Sunna is the record of the Messenger's every act, word, and confirmation, as well as the second source of Islamic legislation and life (the Qur'an is the first one). All scholars of religious sciences, and sometimes those of the natural scientists, use it to establish the principles of their disciplines and to solve difficulties. The Qur'an and authentic prophetic Traditions enjoin Muslims to follow the Sunna.

The Qur'an and the Sunna are inseparable. The Sunna clarifies the ambiguities in the Qur'an by expanding upon what is mentioned only briefly in it, specifies what is unconditional, enables generalizations from what is specifically stated, and particularizations from what is generally stated.

For example, how to pray, fast, give alms, and make pilgrimage was established and expounded in the Sunna. So were such principles or legislation that no one can inherit from the Prophet, killers cannot inherit from their victims, the meat of domestic donkeys and wild animals cannot be eaten, and men cannot marry a wife's female cousins if she is still living. Indeed, the Sunna is relevant to all aspects of Islam, and Muslims must design their lives according to it. For this reason, it has been studied and transmitted to each new generation with almost the same care as the Qur'an.

The Messenger ordered his Companions to obey his Sunna absolutely. He spoke distinctly, so they could understand and memorize his words, and encouraged them to convey his every word to future generations. Sometimes he even urged them to write his words down, for: "Whatever I say is true." The Companions were fully attentive to what his words and deeds and showed a great desire to mold their lives to his, even in the smallest details. They regarded his every word and deed as a Divine trust to which they must adhere and follow as closely as possible. Viewing his words as Divine gifts, they internalized and preserved them and transmitted them to future generations.

As truthfulness is the cornerstone of the Islamic character, the Companions did not lie. Just as they did not distort or alter the Qur'an, they did their best to preserve the Traditions and entrust them to future generations by either memorizing them or writing them down. Among the Hadith compilations made during the time of the Companions, three are very famous: Al-Sahifa al-Sadiqa by 'Abd Allah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As, Al-Sahifa al-Sahiha by Hammam ibn Munabbih, and Al-Majmu' by Zayd ibn 'Ali ibn Husayn.

The Companions were extremely conscientious in relating the Traditions. For example, 'A'isha and 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar would relate them word for word, not changing even one letter. Ibn Mas'ud and Abu al-Darda' would tremble, as if feverish, when asked to report a Tradition.

Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz (ruled 717-20 ce) ordered that the orally preserved and circulated individual

Quote

"....a mass of detail in the early sources show that he was an honest and upright man who had gained the respect and loyalty of others who were like-wise honest and upright men."

-ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA, Vol. 12

Tradition compilations be written down. Such illustrious figures as Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib, Sha'bi, 'Alqama, Sufyan al-Thawri, and Zuhri pioneered this sacred task. They were followed by the greatest specialists, who were entirely focused on the Traditions' accurate transmittal, as well as studying their meaning and wording and their narrators' careful critiques.

Thanks to these Traditionists, we have the second source of Islam in its original purity. Only through studying the Prophet's life and then conforming our own to it can we gain God's good pleasure and travel the way leading to Paradise. The greatest saints receive their light from this "sun" of guidance, Prophet Muhammad, and send it to those in darkness so that they may find their way.

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